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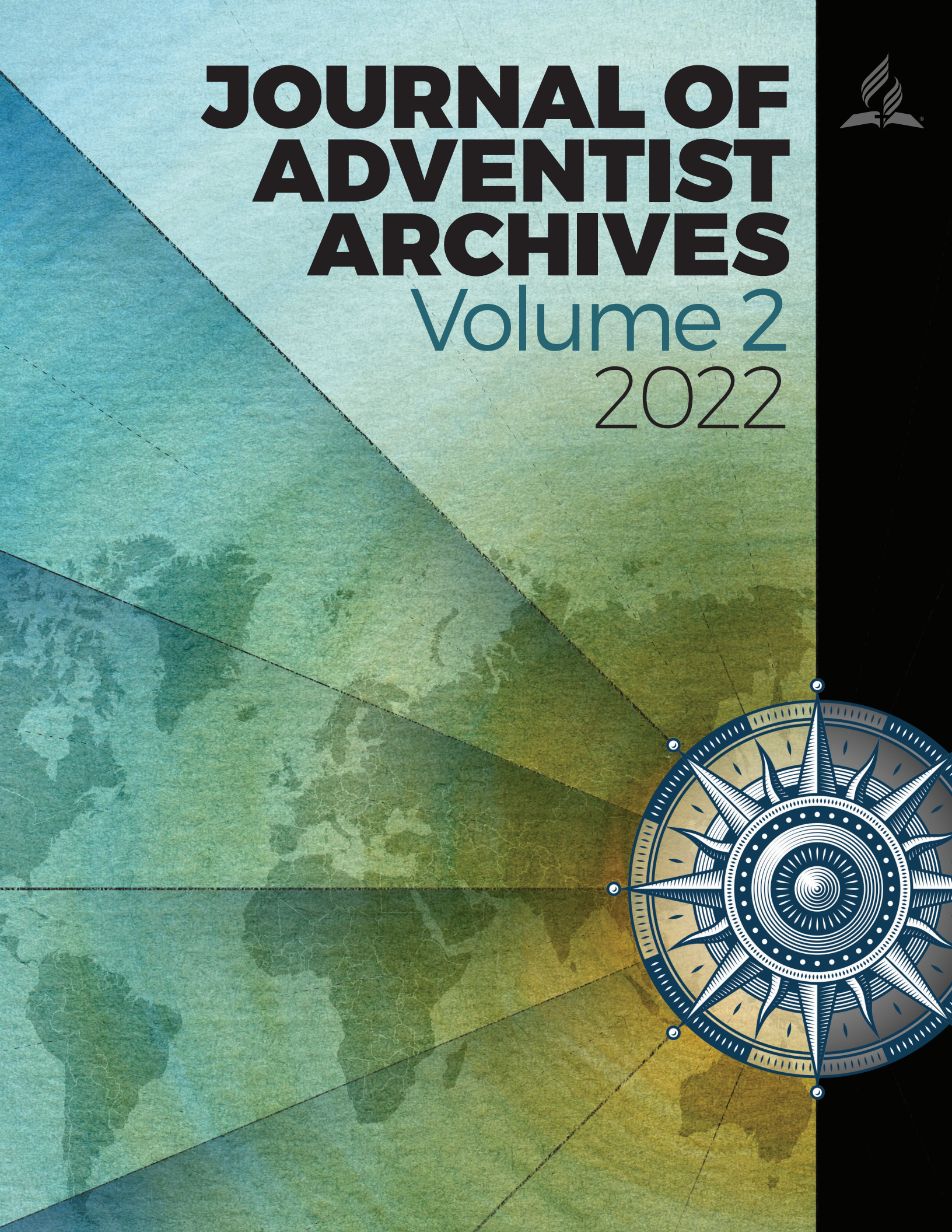

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Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research
Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters
12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904
United States of America

www.adventistarchives.org
archives@gc.adventist.org

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Foreword

Roy K. Kline, Editor
D. J. B. Trim, Director of ASTR

We are proud to welcome readers to the second volume of the *Journal of Adventist Archives*.

This issue includes the texts of not one but two annual "Adventist Archives Lectures": the 2020 lecture by Benjamin Baker of the University of Maryland and the 2022 lecture by David Holland of Harvard University's Divinity School. In addition, the issue contains a provocative historiographical article by Nicholas Miller of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University; and an article dedicated to archival matters, by three colleagues from Andrews University, who present "lessons learned" from the application of optical character recognition software to a manuscript collection. Two other articles deal with archives: an article by Evodia Khumalo of the Adventist Church's Southern Africa–Indian Ocean Division, on the division's development of its records center and archives; and the annual wrap-up of materials newly arrived and/or accessioned at the General Conference Archives. Finally, we are pleased to publish two book reviews–the first reviews to appear in the *Journal*.

We in the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference wish you good reading!

Articles

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"Heaven's Favorites": What an Imminent Parousia meant for Antebellum Blacks[1]

by
Benjamin Baker

Introduction

The years 2020-2021 have been the most turbulent and chaotic of the new millennium, and the consequences they've wrought are not even over yet. Social media has already christened 2020 the "worst year ever" and some say that it should be categorized as an expletive, as in, "I can't stand that guy. He is such a 2020." The hyperbole of "the culture" is well-founded in this case. The world has been under quarantine, gripped by a global pandemic that is COVID-19. In the US COVID-19 has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, massive unemployment, financial havoc, and a generally low morale. In response to appalling conduct by police officers in the cases of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and most reprehensibly George Floyd, the nation, and the world, erupted in protest, chanting "Black Lives Matter" (BLM), "I Can't Breathe," and the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Hundreds of thousands of Americans joined in protest calling for the defunding of the police and criminal justice reform, The New York Times estimating that BLM is probably "the largest movement in US history."

For reasons that are surely controversial, some of the protests turned violent and destructive, and parts of major US cities were destroyed and burned. Imitating their urban counterparts,

[1] This article was originally delivered on October 22, 2020, at the Second Annual Adventist Archives Lectureship series, which is sponsored by Washington Adventist University and the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is included here in this issue alongside the third presentation in the lectureship series.

massive wildfires blazed in other parts of the country, destroying thousands of acres. Other natural disasters—which many speculated were not so natural—hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, devastated the nation. Immigration on the Southern US border remained in a crisis state, made worse by political posturing and grandstanding. On social media the moral failings of men continued to be exposed by the #metoo movement, and "cancel culture," the public chastening and liquidating of individuals for a past transgression, gained an unprecedented reach.

Instead of uniting, the US seemed more politically divided than ever, stoked by a rancorous president who used Twitter as a bully pulpit. And now, tonight, on the 176th anniversary of the Great Disappointment, we are just weeks away from a presidential election that is bound to be one of the most contentious in recent American history.

Things will never be the same. In this new demanding reality, more than ever our Adventist faith needs to speak to the profound matters of life and society. This article will show how ten black people in the antebellum period held hope in this day, October 22, and how that hope spoke to their very real concerns of identity, purpose, consolation, justice, and freedom. Their lives were certainly as perilous as ours in 2020, and they considered the advent hope essential to meet those perils. Instead of merely an escapist ideology, these men and women will demonstrate how a belief in the near parousia equip them to meet the brutal uncertainties of our world in an empowered and decisive way.

Sojourner Truth: Advent Hope for Life Purpose

When Sojourner Truth was still Isabella Baumfree, she first heard William Miller lecture in New York City. That year of 1843 she was itinerating as a Christian preacher and shortly after hearing Miller she fell in with a group of Millerites in Bristol, Connecticut. Truth was hosted by the adventists and ministered to them for a period until her restless energy told her it was time to move on. The leader of the group, Henry Bradley, considered Truth to have prophetic abilities, and sent a letter of commendation to another Millerite believer stating, "I send you this living messenger….You can see by this sister that God does, by his Spirit alone, teach his own children things to come. Please

receive her, and she will tell you some new things to come…".[2] Truth had a similar reception at advent camp meetings in Connecticut that she attended that summer. The Millerites there "listened eagerly to Sojourner, and drank in all she said," according to Truth's autobiography, and she "soon became a favorite among them." When the black preacher spoke spoke she claimed that "the whole audience melted into tears by her touching stories.'"[3] She wintered with the adventists.

It was during this season with the Millerites that Truth biographer Nell Irvin Painter contends that Isabella Baumfree experienced a rebirth as Sojourner Truth, thus "launching the career of antislavery feminism for which she is known to this day."[4] She chose the name "Sojourner," Painter explains, for her belief that she didn't have long on the earth because of the advent near. A slave for almost thirty years of her life, Truth joined the adventists because they welcomed her and listened to her, recognizing her extraordinary wisdom and oratorical gift before the nation did. In so doing the Millerites provided the incubation for Truth's self-actualization for a career geared toward liberating blacks, removing the oppression of women, and helping the poor. The advent hope for Truth was a preparation for a life of advocating for justice.

William Still: Advent Hope Fuel for Activism

A 22-year-old William Still also encountered adventism while unsure about his life course. Somehow in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey he got his hands on a tract of William Miller's lectures and scrutinized his time calculations. He eventually became persuaded of a soon advent, although his faith transcended any dates. Still wrote in his autobiography more than forty years after the Great Disappointment that "when 1843-4 passed, my faith and hope remained unchanged in the All-Supreme."[5] By all evidence, he remained an ardent advent believer for the rest of his life.

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[2] Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, A Northern Slave* (Sojourner Truth, 1850), 106.
[3] Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, A Northern Slave*, 113-114.
[4] Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (W.W. Norton Company & Inc., 1996), 79-87. Also see Margaret Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America* (University of Illinois Press, 2009), 152-154.
[5] William Still, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: William Still, 1886), xi.

What does it mean that William Still, the "Father of the Underground Railroad" who assisted many hundreds of black slaves to freedom, was an adventist? It seems that such a theological underpinning had just the opposite effect on Still than the stereotype of some Millerites as "being so heavenly-minded that they were of no earthly good." Still's hope in a sudden end of the world was not inimical to vigorous real-world action, be it risky and illegal. Instead, the advent hope fueled it, keeping the black man hopeful in an often-bleak earthly existence in which he chipped away at a seemingly impregnable oppressive system.

John Lewis: Advent Hope a Love of Liberation

The Millerite belief in a soon second coming attracted other black activists. John W. Lewis was a prominent minister and abolitionist whom Frederick Douglass remarked was "one of the oldest and ablest advocates for human freedom ever raised up among the colored people of the United States."[6] At the height of the movement Lewis was a Millerite leader and evangelist, the Advent Conference in 1843 taking up an offering to pay for him to "spend his whole time laboring among that much neglected class of our brethren."[7]

What did the advent hope mean to Lewis, a man who directed his energies to alleviate the plight of blacks? The answer lies in a piece he wrote in The Midnight Cry in April 1844, titled "To the colored people of the United States who love our Lord Jesus Christ." Lewis stated that his addressees had a deeper interest in human freedom than any other people, yet were still in bondage and affliction. But the end of the world "is just upon us," and because of that, all hope in the American political system—laws, legislatures, congress, voting—should be jettisoned for its futility. He averred that only at the coming of Christ would slavery and all its attendant injustices and crimes be "forever settled." Lewis the Millerite had lost faith in the exact processes in which he had invested his considerable energies and was now relying on the parousia to accomplish what he, others, and America, had not: the

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[6] Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Paper*, April 7, 1854, 2.
[7] Nathaniel Southard, "Declaration of Principles," *Signs of the Times*, June 7, 1843, 108.

emancipation of black captives.[8] For Lewis, the second coming was the ultimate event for those who loved liberty.

Jabez Campbell: Advent Hope as Consolation of Justice

Jabez Pitt Campbell, elected the eighth bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1864, became a Millerite in his late twenties while pastoring AME congregations in Boston and Providence. A traumatic episode that he experienced illustrates what the doctrine meant to him. On March 26, 1843, in New York City, Campbell purchased a train ticket to Philadelphia after being assured by the ticket agent that he could sit wherever he pleased on the train and would "be as well accommodated as any other gentleman." Campbell chose a secluded car and relaxed. All was fine until a new conductor took over at a stop in Trenton. The white conductor demanded Campbell move to another seat. Campbell asked for the reason and the conductor replied it was none of his business. When Campbell refused to move, the conductor grabbed him by the throat and threw him to the floor. He quickly summoned four more men and they gagged Campbell with a handkerchief and mercilessly beat and caned him, stomping his abdomen until he could no longer call for help. When the train arrived in Philadelphia, Campbell was taken to a physician who determined that he had sustained serious injuries. However, Campbell writes that he did not sue the train company for damages because "I believe there is a just God, who is and will be the avenger of all those that do wrong" and "'hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness.'" Campbell declares "that day I believe not far distant, and then I expect to meet them [his assailants] at the tribunal of God" and at that time "God himself will award them according to their works…with this assurance I have committed myself and all that I have into [God's] hands."[9]

It does not seem that Campbell used the doctrine of the soon advent to avoid addressing real-world issues. At the time of the incident, he was an active abolitionist and outspoken advocate for the rights of free blacks in Providence and Boston. He had, in fact, been sold into slavery in his teenage years after his father defaulted on a debt, and after four and a half years he purchased

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[8] John W. Lewis, *The Midnight Cry!*, May 16, 1844, 352.
[9] Jabez P. Campbell, "Diabolical Outrage," *The Liberator*, April 28, 1843, 66.

his freedom. During the train incident itself, Campbell refused to vacate his seat at the conductor's arbitrary demand. But when he recognized that justice would not take place in the present legal system, he took assertive solace, as it were, in the second advent, confident that in less than a month he would have perfect justice meted out by God. What other psychological recourse did blacks have from an entire nation's system against them that was apparently impregnable? For Campbell, the advent hope was a consolation when earthly justice failed.

William Watkins: Advent Hope a Reason to Persevere

William Watkins was a black educator, physician, and minister based in Baltimore, Maryland. He had served as a mentor to William Lloyd Garrison and was commended in David Walker's legendary Appeal as the "very judicious colored Baltimorean." Watkins' entire family accepted the Millerite message in 1842 and quickly became important to the movement for their dedication and abilities.

But being a black Millerite was a heavy cross. About a month and a half after the Great Disappointment Watkins wrote to Joshua Himes that in believing in the near second coming, "a man can scarcely take…a more effectual step to degrade himself in the eyes of the church and the world."[10] In other places Watkins revealed he was called "crazy" and his family and followers faced persecution from the community. Watkins' acceptance of adventism diminished his standing in Baltimore and probably caused him to lose his appointment as a Methodist minister.

Despite this, William Watkins shepherded a "small, but firm band of colored believers" in Baltimore. The imminent parousia to him meant a surcease to the injustice and oppression of blacks' earthly existence. He stressed to his congregation that "our only hope [is] the speedy coming of Christ to deliver his people, to set up his kingdom, and destroy his enemies."[11] Despite ostracism and provocation from the community, this belief sustained Watkins and his Baltimore flock longer than it did most other Millerites, for the community remained largely intact from 1842

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[10] William Watkins, "Letter from Bro. Wm. Watkins," *The Advent Herald and Signs of the Times Reporter*, December 18, 1844, 151.
[11] William Watkins, "Letter from Bro. W. Watkins," *The Advent Herald and Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1847, 174.

through the 1844 Disappointment, and until the Watkins family moved to Canada in 1852. When Himes visited Watkins in Canada, he found that the black minister was leading a group of Millerites there. For William Watkins, the advent hope was a reason to persevere.

William Foy: Advent Hope for Braving Racism

Like William Watkins, William Foy had to face hardship for his adventist beliefs. Foy was a black minister who received visions of the coming judgment and heaven in 1842 and '43. In his pamphlet describing his first two visions, Foy shared his fierce internal struggle when God told him to share his revelations with others. The young black man balked at the task, intimating that "the message [in the visions] was so different—and the manner in which the command was given, so different from any I had ever heard of, and knowing the prejudice against those of my color, it became very crossing."[12] The newspaper accounts of the day show that Millerites not only had to face ridicule for their beliefs, but for holding meetings where blacks and whites sat together and socialized. Black Millerites were especially the brunt of this. One example of this is an article that is likely targeting Foy in the Portland Tribune from his hometown of Portland, Maine:

> "When will Wonders cease? The Millerites of this city, have recently imported a great bull nigger, who has been rolling up the white of his eyes, showing his ivory, and astonishing the good people by his dreams and prognostications. It is said the fat and greasy black, can neither read nor write—but he told of the joys of the blest and the wailings of the damned with such gusto, that even the weakest disciple of the prophet smacked his lips for more. What will be the end of these things, we cannot divine….We soon expect to see this fat bull nigger, superbly dressed, seated in a chariot, and drawn through our streets, by the devoted disciples of Miller, who will bow down and worship him as a God."[13]

Foy's belief in the advent gave him the courage to brave this vile racism and travel giving lectures on his visions for three years. Based on eyewitness accounts from Millerites, John

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[12] William E. Foy, *The Christian Experience of William E. Foy* (Portland, Maine: J. and C.H. Pearson, 1845), 21.
[13] "When will wonders cease?" *Portland Tribune*, February 10, 1844.

Loughborough describes Foy's ministry among advent believers: "Having a good command of language, with fine descriptive powers, he created a sensation wherever he went. By invitation he went from city to city to tell of the wonderful things he had seen." Loughborough continues: "In order to accommodate the vast crowds who assembled to hear him, large halls were secured, where he related to thousands what had been shown him of the heavenly world, the loveliness of the New Jerusalem, and of the angelic hosts. When dwelling on the tender, compassionate love of Christ for poor sinners, he exhorted the unconverted to seek God, and scores responded to his entreaties."[14] The black visionary admitted that despite his success he "suffered some persecution" and "seasons of temptation and trial."[15] But his message of a coming Deliverer fortified him to face the very earthly racism while sharing his message.

Black Slaves: Advent Hope for Earthly Liberation

Just 14 days before the before the final major date set for Christ's coming of October 22, 1844, Millerite preacher Enoch Jacobs was making what he believed to be his final appeals for salvation. His tent was in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, his message simple: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." Jacobs exulted to the readers of The Midnight Cry that "hundreds in Louisville that have embraced the glorious doctrine of Christ's advent at the door, may be found persons of all classes…" Among them were enslaved blacks whom Jacobs wrote "with one consent, receive it as a welcome message."[16]

Perhaps the greatest irony, and really hypocrisy, of American slavery was that Bible-believing, churchgoing Protestants often held slaves. Such was the case with one of Jacobs' converts, "a Baptist preacher of superior talents." He told Jacobs that his belief in the advent had caused his friends to disown him. The preacher had four slaves. He decided to start preaching the advent message, but before he set out—Jacobs writes that he did it in preparation

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[14] J.N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1906), 145-146.
[15] William E. Foy, *The Christian Experience of William E. Foy* (Portland, Maine: J. and C.H. Pearson, 1845), 23.
[16] Enoch Jacobs, "Letter From Bro. Jacobs," *The Midnight Cry*, October 19, 1844, 7.

for his preaching—he freed his four slaves. For those four blacks, the advent hope meant earthly liberation.

Conclusion

The black adventists outlined above obviously did not see the second coming of Christ in their day. But their hope in it brought real value to their lives and the world in which they lived. Their advent hope fortified them to do good in a world that remained longer than they would have liked, a world rife with oppression and injustice. But the hope gave them a vision to shape their present world into something like the coming one. This seems to be our task as well on this day 176 years later.

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New Works in Many Languages: Ellen G. White, the Urgency of Translation, and an Adventist Way of Being in the World

by
David Holland

In the second half of the nineteenth century, two American women presented what they characterized as their divinely inspired writings to the world. Ellen White (1827-1915) and Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910)—founding figures of, respectively, Seventh-day Adventism and Christian Science—disseminated their revelatory messages through texts that were originally composed in English and claimed applicability to all of humanity. These two New England-born contemporaries shared numerous similarities, but they also differed in a vast variety of ways. Among those differences was the fact that Ellen White pursued a relatively early and vigorous campaign for the translation of her writings into multiple languages while Mary Baker Eddy largely resisted the translation of her principal text throughout her life. These divergent attitudes toward translation signify the distinctive worldviews that divided these American prophets and also suggest something significant about the shared time and place in which they worked.

Questions of Translation: Perpetual, Old, and New

Translation has always been an especially fraught matter in religious traditions that venerate divinely inspired writings. William Tyndale's sixteenth-century execution for the act of translating the Bible into vernacular English presents one of the most vivid examples in Christian history of the division and anger

that scriptural translations can inflame. Islamic traditions widely insist that when the Qur'an is rendered into a language other than the original Arabic the resulting text loses its status as revelation, becoming a kind of commentary on scripture rather than scripture itself.[1] Does the word of God remain the word of God when humans find other words for it? If it is to spread beyond the confines of a narrowly monolingual readership, is there any other choice?

Anguish about translation is especially pronounced in zones of interlingual contact—periods and places where different language cultures converge. Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen White occupied such a zone in at least two respects. First, they lived in an era of extensive immigration to the United States, where fresh waves of non-English-speaking people continually interacted with a dominant Anglophonic culture. In the period when their ministries were beginning to gain traction, an illustrative religious argument about translations occurred among American Jews when Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise controversially set Reform Judaism on a course at odds with its more orthodox counterparts by supporting the publication of *Minhag America*—an ostensibly unifying synagogue prayer book—in Hebrew, Hebrew-English, and parallel German-English editions. As one scholar of Jewish history has observed of Wise's publication choice, "what could be a more glaring offense against the uniformity of the ritual than for different congregations to pray in different languages?" Such translations made the prayers more accessible to more people, but—just as Wise's critics feared—his relative lack of concern for the original language of the prayers may have been prologue to his relative lack of respect for the traditional sanctity of set prayers themselves. [2] Ongoing immigration meant the question of what is gained and what is lost in translation would keep coming up for Jews, Catholics, and other religious communities that had roots tracing back to sacred utterance in other lands and that sought to

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[1] Quranic debates are particularly illustrative of the conceptual tensions generated by the idea of human translations of divine revelation. See Fazlur Rahman, "Translating the Qur'an," *Religion and Literature* (Spring 1988), 23-30; and Tijani Boulaouali, "Quran Translation: A Historical-Theological Exploration," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* (June 2021): 120-32.

[2] Aryeh Rubinstein, "Isaac Mayer Wise: A New Appraisal," *Jewish Social Studies* (Winter-Spring, 1977): 63-64.

integrate newcomers whose devotions found first expression in languages other than English. Before their writings ever left the United States, both Eddy's and White's messages navigated a linguistically diverse nation of immigrants.[3]

Second, and relatedly, Eddy and White lived in a world profoundly shaped by Anglophonic coloniality and emerging visions of English as a global language. In 1865, the poet George Washington Moon professed, "I . . . believe that the English language is destined to be that in which shall arise, as in one universal temple, the utterance of the worship of all hearts."[4] Such sentiment reflected both the linguistic realities of a spreading empire and a kind of nationalistic pride in the distinctive literary accomplishments of English authors. English was presented as a very particular tongue with very global ambitions. Note, for instance, the Victorian literary critic Charles William Russell's assertion that most English literature worked well in translation while exceptional works proved stoutly resistant to the effort. Charles Dickens's writing, Russell held, is "so completely English, as well in its matter as in its peculiar phraseology, as to be untranslatable."[5] Cultural exportation in a language of increasing global reach intensified questions about the necessity, propriety, and consequence of translating from English. In a convergence of countervailing trends, imperial awareness of the world's linguistic diversity and the possibility of Anglophonic dominance were simultaneously increasing in the era when Eddy and White faced pressing decisions about what to do with their writings. Should they be kept in the original English of their initial inspirations or could they be re-rendered for a linguistically diverse world? For

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[3] Chigemezi Nnadozie Wogu, "Returnee Immigrants and the Founding of Seventh-day Adventism in Europe," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, 16 (2021): 88-99; "Open Letters," *The Christian Science Journal*, August 1889, p.263.

[4] George Washington Moon, *The Dean's English: A Criticism on the Dean of Canterbury's Essays on the Queen's English* 4th ed. (London: Hatchard and Co., 1865), 122.

[5] Quoted in J.-A. George, "Poetry in Translation," in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Anthony H. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 262; quoted in Annmarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44.

writers who claimed their words had both a heavenly source and a whole-earthly mission, those decisions carried enormous freight.

Case in Point: *The Desire of Ages*

In asserting weighty historical—and even theological and ontological—significance for the issue of translation, this lecture begins at a starting point formed by the historian of Adventism Denis Kaiser, who has published on various aspects of the matter. In a 2012 article, Kaiser recovers the translation history of Ellen White's *Life of Christ*, a manuscript that was prepared (though never actually printed) in English before it was published in Danish-Norwegian, Swedish, German, French, and Finnish translations. The process by which *Life of Christ* was reworked for different languages and different cultures, Kaiser argues, was an important step in the literary process by which White's major subsequent work *The Desire of Ages* came to be. By this telling, *The Desire of Ages*—a volume of tremendous doctrinal and cultural importance in Adventism—would have looked rather different in form and content even in its original English editions if the textual genealogy that preceded it had not run through a series of non-English iterations.[6]

In the 1870s, Ellen White had constructed an initial inspired history of Jesus Christ's life in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 2 and 3. With prophetic authority, White's texts filled in the gaps of the biblical account and added human depth to the gospel narratives—the anxious thoughts of the wise men, Jesus's height and the distinctiveness of his voice, the look on the face of the woman at the well—while drawing authoritative moral lessons from the episodes of Christ's ministry. Demonstrating a persistent commitment to the ongoing project of producing the fullest possible biography of Jesus, White returned to this project in the early 1880s, revising and expanding the *Spirit of Prophecy* story into the *Life of Christ* manuscript, which she and her associates swiftly identified as a worthy candidate for translation into European languages. Crucially, because the English manuscript was not published—and was thus still in a malleable state—the effort to translate it became part of its formative process. When

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[6] Denis Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's *Life of Christ*: An Episode in the History of Early Adventist Translation Work," *Spes Christiana* (2011-2012): 131-48.

the manuscript was sent to translators, they sent back notes about how the English version could be altered to make it more amenable to a clear and culturally appropriate translation. They brought the linguistic concerns from their native languages and the historical perspectives of their native lands to encourage revisions to the English as part of their effort to render these truths more effectively to their respective audiences.[7]

Ellen White, Kaiser shows, openly received and responded to their concerns. And those recommendations by the translators are quite clearly reflected in the text that then ultimately appeared in English as *The Desire of Ages*, published in 1898. The story of Jesus Christ's mortal ministry—first captured in English, significantly revised through a translation process, and then brought back into English in its altered state—reflected the impact that linguistic diversity could have on a core message of the faith. As Kaiser concludes, it also reveals something important about Ellen White's understanding of the nature of inspiration and its textual production. He convincingly argues that if she had a verbal plenary understanding of her prophetic gifts—that is, if she believed the very words she received were matters of precise divine direction— she would not have been likely to allow the suggestions made by mere translators in this interpretive process to inform the subsequent content of her prophetic publications.[8]

This conclusion about the significance of translation is compelling, but I think the implications go even further than Kaiser suggests. The early Adventist culture of translation illuminates more than a particular view of revelation and scripture; it seems to reflect something important about a particular Adventist view of human existence itself. Adventist theology, culture, and experience emphasized the significant role that particularities of time and place played in shaping a person's being, and that these particularities were often essential elements of—rather than always an obstacle to—God's redemptive work in

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[7] Ibid.; Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Vol. II (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1877); Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Vol. III (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1878).
[8] Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's *Life of Christ*," 131-48.

the world. Their early considerations of translation clearly illustrate this view.

Historical Awareness, Inspiration, and Translation

As with most bible-believers of their time and place, nineteenth-century Adventists knew the Bible had a complex textual history. The early decades of the *Review and Herald*, Adventism's official paper, demonstrate a familiarity with the genealogies of translation that brought about the dominant King James Version (KJV). Like other Christians, Adventists felt acutely the importance of linguistic fidelity in biblical translations and raised questions of a translation's reliability when it served polemical purposes: On some theological matters (such as the proper mode of baptism) the KJV seemed to them to be lacking; when it came to a seventh-day Sabbath, it could seem quite sufficient. One of the most striking moments of dissatisfaction with the standard translation came during the Civil War, when James White argued against the KJV's tendency to render certain Hebrew words as connoting *slavery;* he thought they should be rendered so as to suggest *servitude*. Tellingly, his initial complaint rested not just on language but also on history. He contended that the King James translators were too much a product of their time and place; that they were working at a moment when Europeans were reaping huge financial rewards from the slave trade, and that this historical setting helped account for their translation errors. His concern about translation reflects a historicizing sense of the world, a view of human experience in which temporal and geographical locations shape even so sacred a work as the presentation of scripture.[9] The word of the eternal God passed

[9] As early as 1861, *The Review and Herald* published various commentary on the history of the translation of the Bible, noting both that the King James Version was not perfect and that it was worthy of respect. See G.W.A. "List of English Translations That Preceded King James' Version," *Review and Herald*, 10 Dec. 1861, p.12; "Books of the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 19 March 1861, p.142. For discussions of translations of key words in scripture, such as "baptism" and "Sabbath", see M. Hull, "Baptism—the Mode," *Review and Herald*, 10 February 1859, p.90; James White's multipart article on slavery in the Bible repeatedly opened up by addressing matters of translation: see "Bondmen and Bondmaids," *Review and Herald*, 11 November 1862, pp. 190-91. All *Review and Herald* and *Present Truth* citations referenced through the ASTR digitized archive, https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/Forms/AllFolders.aspx.

through the particular influences of text and context. Humans, such a view suggests, are unavoidably enmeshed in history.

Ellen White occasionally seemed to extend that ontological framework even to divine inspiration itself. In a widely quoted message to the church from the early twentieth century, she expressed frustration that Adventists applied her prophetic counsels with a kind of timelessly static rigidity, not taking into account the particularities of the circumstances in which her testimonies had been received and written, and failing to recognize that contexts of time and place change. In calling on her coreligionists to consider context when applying revealed light, she declared, "Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things."[10] Her assertion is striking in its absoluteness; inspiration, it seems, never transcends context. God's will may be unchanging, but the circumstances in which it is received ever evolve, and thus the human interpreter should remain perpetually attentive to the interplay of the timeless truth and the moving backdrop against which it must be understood. Ellen's teaching on the influence and unavoidability of changing context—in other words, her commitment to the historical nature of human existence—intertwined with her understanding of revelation and translation.

The question of translating inspiration hit Adventists at two levels. First, like other Bible-believers, Adventists worried about how the Good Book had been rendered into English and were mindful of the projects to translate it into other languages for the purposes of global evangelism.[11] Yet, unlike other Protestants who could largely work together on getting the Bible into the languages of various peoples around the globe, when it came to the writings of Ellen White, Adventists had to go it alone. They had choices to make and riddles to resolve that were uniquely theirs, work in which they had no natural collaborators beyond their denominational boundaries. However, to say that they had no

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[10] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3 (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2006), 217.

[11] Note, for instance, that *The Review and Herald* ran a speech delivered by Horace Lorenzo Hastings before the Massachusetts convention of the YMCA which cited the multiplying translations of the Bible of evidence that God was filling the earth with his word. See Hastings, "The Inspiration of the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 6 November 1883, pp.715.

allies is not to say that they had no comparisons. Adventists had to decide for themselves how to handle the translation of Ellen White's inspired words, but they also had contemporaries who faced comparable kinds of choices. Latter-day Saints worked to spread the revealed writings of Joseph Smith to the world and Christian Scientists had to do likewise for the work of Mary Baker Eddy. Eddy is an especially interesting point of comparison, in part because she saw things so very differently from Ellen White.

The comparison with Eddy reminds us that the first important element of the Adventist experience with translating Ellen White's writings is that they were translated at all. Without the comparison, this may seem like an absurd point. Of course Adventists would translate these writings, one might say. Afterall, the masthead of the *Review and Herald* declared—at least beginning with the first issue of 1886—that "[our] field is the world." How could such a globally-minded church possibly proceed without a serious translation effort? The easily presumed answer to that rhetorical question loses some of its obviousness when considering a contemporary of Ellen White who answered it otherwise. Unlike White, Eddy proved persistently hesitant and skeptical about the translation of her revealed text into non-English languages. Although she certainly believed that her message was for the whole human race, only at the end of Eddy's life did she allow a parallel English-German edition of her text, which would actually appear two years after her death.[12] In comparison, Ellen White's urgency to translate becomes a choice worthy of consideration rather than simply an overdetermined inevitability.

Mary Baker Eddy and the Poetics of Spirit

Mary Baker Eddy's skepticism about translation had to do, perhaps ironically, with the fact that she saw herself as a translator. As she undertook to capture the language of the Spirit in a human dialect, she felt acutely the near impossibility of her task. Indeed, she devoted the last forty years of her life to the effort

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[12] See Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 36; Catherine Hammond, "'We are Translating *Science and Health* into German'," *Longyear Museum* (Spring/Summer 2009): 2-4.

of refining the translation project; perhaps in reflection of her early experiences as a published poet, the right words mattered to her in a particularly profound way. She came to believe that for the task of translating heavenly truth into earthly language, familiar usage was inadequate. Over the course of many editions of *Science and Health*, she worked out a new way of writing English in an effort to close the gap between divine principle and human understanding. Any reader of *Science and Health* will swiftly note the poetic license it takes with standard syntax and accepted meanings. "My diction," Eddy noted, "as used in explaining Christian Science, has been called original. The liberty that I have taken with capitalization, in order to express the 'new tongue,' has well-nigh constituted a new style of language." The challenge of translation helps explain her emphasis on the demonstration of spiritual principle through embodied health. By observing the healings that she and her teaching accomplished, she believed a person could encounter "the untranslated revelations of Christian Science." This sense, that one should get as close as possible to the "untranslated" truth, affected even her view of ancient scripture, whose meaning could best be got at not through a better translation but by appeal to the original source: "A spiritual understanding of the Scriptures," she wrote, "restores their original tongue in the language of Spirit,--that primordial standard of Truth." She thought of the crucial work of human enlightenment as the process of bridging the gaps between languages. She declared that "Spiritual sense is a conscious, constant capacity to understand God. It shows the superiority of faith by works over faith in words. Its ideas are expressed only in 'new tongues;' and these are interpreted by the translation of the spiritual original into the language which human thought can comprehend." So much of Eddy's messaging acknowledged the challenges of translation, and she poured decades of work into perfecting her English translation of truths originally conveyed in the transcendent language of the Spirit. With such a view, it hardly seems surprising that she was skeptical of any other translator's ability to capture the essence of her work in yet a different human tongue.[13]

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[13] Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany* (Boston, 1913), 317-18, 179-80; Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the*

Eddy's identity as translator of Spirit was so pronounced in her self-presentation that outside observers picked up on it. In Mark Twain's famous profile of Eddy, he consistently highlighted the concept of translation. He described *Science and Health* as originating with "the flaming angel of the Apocalypse and handed down in our day to Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy of New Hampshire and translated by her, word for word, into English." This, for Twain, made it all the more incomprehensible that Eddy repeatedly published revised editions of the text. "Was not the first translation complete?," he sardonically asked. In one of his most acerbic shots at her literary idiosyncrasies, he noted that her writing could not "by any art be translated *into* a fully understandable form."[14] His incessant jabs at Eddy as translator, and the idiosyncrasy of spiritual language, underscored the high stakes of revelatory translation. For Eddy and her supporters, the lengthy and painstaking journey through multiple editions was proof that the latest iteration was always the closest, most refined, purest possible rendering of divine truth. For skeptics like Twain, it was evidence that the text was more likely the product of human labor than divine effusion. Either way, all acknowledged that it had taken her decades to work on her English translation of the spiritual language, and that the resulting composition was rather particular, suggesting that any non-English translations of the text would face an imposing set of challenges and expectations in re-rendering a book that had—by its very production process—placed such enormous weight on the way its truths were written. To try, then, to multiply its versions in a world of diverse languages did not appear a practical or attractive way to unify humanity in spiritual principle. Science, after all, should deal with evidences that need no translation and principles that transcend human difference. This is a different way of understanding revelation than the one Ellen White bequeathed to Adventism. And in this difference lay different ways of viewing human existence itself.

Scriptures (Boston, 1908), 115, 209-210.

[14] Mark Twain, *Christian Science* (New York: Harpers, 1907), 45, 289; Mark Twain, "Christian Science and the Book of Mrs. Eddy," *Cosmopolitan* (October 1899): 592.

The Universal and the Particular

Time spent with the lives and ideas of Ellen White and Mary Baker Eddy quickly reveals two contrasting intellectual orientations. White often looked to master the telling of history; Eddy typically worked to transcend the tyranny of history. White labored to draw clearer and more accurate lines around the sacred and secular aspects of existence—for instance by adamantly identifying the proper timing of the Sabbath Day (the "seventh-day") and then insisting on its careful observance; Eddy strove to blur such categorical distinctions by arguing that no day of the week was any holier than the equally sacred time that surrounded it. White thought individual human personality to be divinely important; Eddy considered it something of an impediment to the highest truths. Their most conspicuous differences—the one from which so many others flowed—occurred on the question of ontology, the very nature of our being. White came to believe that spirits had no consciousness independent of the body; Eddy ultimately taught that bodies had no existence outside of Mind. When White declared that humans had no immortal souls, and when Eddy declared that humans had no earthly matter, they both broke from a dominant Christian view that had long explained human nature as a tense coexistence of temporal flesh and eternal spirit. But they broke in opposite directions.

Their lives and missions and remarkable successes in coalescing churches around their ministries suggests to us a historical moment when their surrounding culture was facing a serious ontological riddle: Did physical location in time and space matter—really matter—in the lives of God's human creation? In the nineteenth century, two processes of intellectual discovery were suggesting two very different answers to this question. The physical sciences were in pursuit of the historically transcendent laws of existence: laws that functioned no differently in 5th century BC than they did in the present day, laws that functioned as consistently in Africa as they did in the Arctic, laws that were impervious to differences of culture and context. A certain powerful strain of thought in the period increasingly demanded that such universal principles held the key to really understanding what it meant to be human. And yet, simultaneous to that growing appeal to universal scientism was an increasing awareness of humanity's lived diversity in both time and space. Increasing anthropological investigations and historical theorization

stimulated a growing recognition of just how varied human experience could be based on where and when a person lived. A burgeoning sense of contextual difference, the idea that the past was a different country, and that different countries saw things from different perspectives, was on the rise at the very same time that a belief in scientific universality was making its strongest claim to a monopoly on meaningful knowledge.

Our intellectual histories have not yet fully grappled with the ontological consequences of this collision, even though it marks the great conundrum of modernity, persisting at the heart of our most serious cultural and conceptual conflicts to this very day. For religious concerns, the most pressing form of that question asks whether a human being's location in time and space and culture affects one's relationship with and obligations to the divine. Mary Baker Eddy offered a radically clear and remarkably consistent answer to that question, a resounding no. The very words she used to describe her movement—Christian Science—suggested she was in pursuit of those universal laws that governed all truth at all times. The principles she revealed operated independently of any differences of historical or geographical location. She often referred to her doctrine as the "ever-present truth."[15]

Conversely, Ellen White believed that time mattered. She worshipped and served a God who primarily functioned in history rather than above and beyond it. Her Millerite inheritance left her deeply attentive to the varying messages of the apocalyptic angels and the changes that drove different chapters of the human story according to divine decree. As Adventists well know, she often referred to her message as "the present truth." [16] Location in time meant something very different to Ellen White than it meant to Mary Baker Eddy, and in that difference lay clues about the ontological question that gripped their generation—and that still grips ours—and that led people to choose between the divergent answers to that question as offered by these remarkable leaders.

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[15] The phrase appeared throughout Eddy's writings, including repeatedly in the first edition of *Science and Health*. It also appeared in her autobiography. See Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston, 1915), 65-66.

[16] This phrase even became the title of an early Adventist newspaper, in the introductory essay of which White used it repeatedly. See Ellen White, "Dear Brothers and Sisters," *Present Truth*, (August 1849): 21.

Where the name of Mary Baker Eddy's church appealed to the timelessness of science, the name of Ellen White's church—Seventh-day Adventists—was an unmistakable reminder of time: sacred temporality (the seventh-day) and a historical event (the advent).

There is a requisite qualification to this contrast. Attention to the differences in the church names requires comparable acknowledgement of their similarities. That both of their churches' names also allude to Jesus suggests an important corrective to an overly simplified narrative of contrast: A common Christian tether that sets certain limits on their differences. Mary Baker Eddy was too devoted to the biblical tradition and the life of Jesus ever to shake fully loose of the particularizing implications of sacred history; Ellen White was too committed to the universality of God and the resulting kinship of all humanity ever to accept the radically relativistic implications of wholesale particularism. This, then, is not a study of reductively drawn opposites. It is a portrait of two complex Christian leaders, whose intellectual inclinations tellingly leaned in contrasting directions, but whose shared commitments created key places of overlap. Their differing answers to the shared riddle of translation is one site of many that illuminate this point.

History, Theology, and Theologies of History

Consider, for example, the ways in which their church cultures preserve these figures' memories and their teachings. Both Christian Science and Seventh-day Adventism take the study of their founding histories seriously, but they approach them somewhat differently. This may be the appropriate moment to touch on one of the express purposes of the Adventist Archives lectureship series at Washington Adventist University, which is to draw attention to the place and purpose of the office of Archives, Statistics, and Research's archival efforts at the General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Here, as someone who has spent time in the archives of both churches, I might turn more ethnographer than historian and briefly compare the two archival cultures.

First, both archives are wonderfully welcoming and supportive. I have been warmly received in both Boston and Silver Spring. I have met dedicated and knowledgeable scholars in both spaces. Both churches clearly value their history. Both want to

understand the lives and legacies of their founding figures and pay due respect to the pioneers of their movements. The two archives differ significantly, however, in their size and scale, signaling differing conceptions of how central the historical project is to the larger church missions of each institution. The Adventist Archives—in their magnitude and prominence within the institutional operation of the church—suggest relatively greater weight placed on the religious significance of history. When a movement has a founding prophet for whom the story of salvation was often a matter of historical narration it cannot help but orient the community in a distinctive intellectual direction. (Perhaps the charges of plagiarism they faced provide the clearest sense of this distinction between the two: Eddy has been mostly accused of copying from New Thought theorists; White has been accused primarily of cribbing from historians.[17]) Adventism, like the Millerism from which it emerged, is in a sense an effort to get the history right. The *Conflict of the Ages* book series—the textual heart of White's distinctive mission—represents this effort. History matters culturally to Seventh-day Adventists in a particular way, I suggest, because history matters theologically to Seventh-day Adventism in a particular way. This fact seems especially apparent in comparative context, and it is visibly evinced at the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's headquarters. The lecture series in which this paper was presented, and the archives to which it refers, are continuing evidence of that continuing commitment.

History raises the matter of embodied locale. Does our place—our location—in the flow of time really matter? Ellen White thought it did; Mary Baker Eddy was much more skeptical about the spiritual significance of temporal location. For Eddy it was another materialist particularity that threated to obscure the universal, timeless divine. A passage of her brief autobiography captures her position quite well: "Mere historic incidents and personal events are frivolous and of no moment, unless they illustrate the ethics of Truth. To this end, but only to this end, such narrations may be admissible and advisable; but if spiritual

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[17] Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1998), 119-20; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 9, 12, 34-5, 257-59.

conclusions are separated from their premises, the *nexus* is lost and the argument, with its rightful conclusions, becomes correspondingly obscure. The human history needs to be revised, and the material record expunged."[18] White would have agreed that moral lessons were the objective of historical research; but for Eddy, this meant the historical record should be expunged and, for White, it meant the historical record should be expanded. Where White was always ready to write about the prosaic facts of history, Eddy was much more inclined to pursue ahistorical principles through poetic aesthetics.

Just as they differed in their valuation of one's temporal location, so they seemed to differ on the significance of one's spatial location. This was reflected in their own feeling about the importance of diversifying those locations, a matter that necessarily raised the issue of translation.

Both Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen White believed that the revealed truths they had received were messages of global significance. They both envisioned a worldwide impact for their writings. Mary Baker Eddy, however, never left the eastern seaboard of the United States and hardly even left her beloved New England. Her world-spanning vision could unfold without regard to her physical presence beyond the familiar haunts that lay between downtown Boston and the Merrimack River Valley. Location mattered little. Ellen White, by contrast, moved her physical frame—for what she considered to be pressing religious purposes—to different locations as motivated by her sense of ministry, from New England, to the Midwest, to Switzerland, to Australia, and finally to California, in part because she felt the encounter of the other and the experience of particularity had a salubrious effect.

Matter, Time, and Place

Like Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen White believed there was one God, one Lord, one truth. She was not, by any stretch, anything like a postmodern relativist. Rather, the point is that in her mind God's work intentionally included the presence of earthly particularity—including geographical, cultural, and linguistic diversity—that sometimes seemed a necessary component of,

[18] Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection*, 21-22.

rather than an unnecessary obstacle to, the cause of human salvation. Where Eddy was radically consistent in her transcendent immaterialism, White tended toward more ontological complexity, constantly living with a tension between divine unity and earthly diversity. For White these two realities coexisted and frequently even complemented each other in her ministry. Note that complex combination in a statement like the following, delivered by White in Basel in 1885: "Some who have entered these missionary fields have said, 'You do not understand the French people; you do not understand the Germans. They have to be met in just such a way.' But, I inquire, does not God understand them? Is it not he who gives his servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from him through his servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christ-like."[19] Rather than rejecting the possibility of unity in Christ, and rather than rejecting the lived reality of cultural and linguistic difference, White posited a universal God who knew how to speak to humans in their own diversified ways. The implication is that God's ministers had to recognize and understand difference before unity could be achieved.

In that same speech, White constructed a remarkable metaphor out of the temple at Jerusalem: "The Jewish temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains; and every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested before it was brought to Jerusalem." In an important detail, she saw local formation as crucial to the cause of the collective effort for Christ. "And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of ax or hammer. This building represents God's spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. These are not dead substances to be fitted by hammer and chisel. They are living stones, quarried out from the world by the truth; and the great Master Builder, the Lord of the temple, is now

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[19] Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9 (Oakland: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 179-80.

hewing and polishing them, and fitting them for their respective places in the spiritual temple. When completed, this temple will be perfect in all its parts, the admiration of angels and of men; for its Builder and Maker is God." Here, her inductive method of prophetic ministry is on full display. God would achieve unity in purpose out of diversity of background. Cultural difference appears less as obstacle than as divine opportunity.[20]

This metaphorical combination of diversity and unity—in which each stone retains the character acquired in its place of origin, and is not hammered and chiseled into homogeneity, but still fits unitedly in the sanctuary—captures much of White's recurring approach to these matters. The image conveys her characteristic tension. There is an ideal unity of the faith, a global conformity to the image of the one true Christ, but it comes from the bodily convergence of difference rather than the spiritual transcendence of identity. Consider a line like the following from that same speech: "There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified."[21]

In practical terms, this "mingling" had to do with moving one's physical location: "It is not always pleasant," she once observed in Italy, "for our brethren to live where the people need help most; but their labors would often be productive of far more good if they would do so. They ought to come close to the people, sit with them at their tables, and lodge in their humble homes." Of herself, she said, that she had come to Italy in part "to learn something of the habits and customs of the people, and the best means of reaching them."[22] She came to Europe as both teacher and student. In her son Willie White's recollection, this concept of learning from the mingling was something his mother practiced as well as preached. He wrote, "Mother's contact with European people had brought to her mind scores of things that had been presented to her in vision during past years, some of them two or

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing, 2002), 424.

three times, and other scenes many times. Her seeing of historic places and her contact with the people refreshed her memory with reference to these things, and so she desired to add much material to the book. This was done, and the manuscripts were prepared for translation."[23]

Difference Encountered, Vision Expanded

Once Ellen White began thinking seriously about the issue of translation in the early 1870s, the matter was inextricably connected to her vision of global mission. She never expressed concerns about untranslatability; in keeping with the idea that human diversity offered an opportunity for the progress of God's people, it seems that the task of translation set the stage for the spiritual growth of those involved. Indeed, at times it could appear that she was commissioning translators as partners in the shared work of inspiration. In a rebuke to a coreligionist working in the translation effort, White used the sacred nature of that work to call him to repentance and reform: "In order to be safely trusted with the translation of our most important works, to handle sacred things, ought you not to have the fullest connection with God and complete consecration to His service? Ought you not to be where you can have the holy angels to minister to you, to give you wisdom and knowledge as God gave to Daniel, to inspire you to give the correct ideas, in order that you may do the work of translating correctly?" Here she suggests the translator can be "inspired." She implied that for this work to achieve its maximum impact the translator *must* be inspired. The comparison to Daniel, a biblical prophet of enormous millenarian significance, made the implications of this declaration even more pregnant with possibility. Thus, it seems, the encounter with linguistic difference has the capacity to bring others under the umbrella of revelatory encounters with the divine. Because sacred revelations need translation, translators have access to sacred revelation. Once again, difference comes through as a chance for "elevation"—to use the word she wrote to her translator—rather than a necessary declension from divine homogeneity. Tellingly, it was in the context of this discussion about translation that Ellen White made

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[23] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages,* Book 3 (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing, 2006), 438.

one of her stronger statements about the power of personal inspiration: "There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others…God reveals His will to us in His word, the Holy Scriptures. His voice is also revealed in His providential workings [and] Another way in which God's voice is heard is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart."[24] Encounter with linguistic difference served as the backdrop against which doctrines of revelation emerge in greater precision, clarity, and capaciousness. In a host of ways, the decision to translate Ellen White's texts both reflected and expanded an often unexpressed Adventist commitment to the divine purposes of difference. Whether revising the *Life of Christ* text, or calling on translators to live up to their promise of divine gifts, the effort to engage linguistic diversity seemed to enlarge the revelatory experience of Adventism. To cite one final example, we might take a look at an episode that lies at the origin point of the translation decision. Here we see the possibility that a growing awareness of language difference—and language capacity—in the United States helped shaped a more capacious understanding of what God was revealing with regard to the global reach of Adventism.

In the spring of 1874 Ellen White was in Oakland, California thinking about where the gospel message should be preached next. She had a dream in which she saw the councils of the church deliberating about whether they should focus their evangelizing efforts in rural or urban areas. Perhaps sitting in the East Bay, where she could look across the water and watch one of the nation's most rapidly growing and diversifying urban centers take shape, helped focus her mind on certain aspects of this dream. (The 1870s was the first decade in which San Francisco cracked the top 10 most populous cities in the United States.) In the dream, many of the church leaders attending the meeting believed that their message should be reserved for small towns, the implication being that they were somewhat fearful of the big cities. Then a wise voice—which White later identified as that of an angel—offered the following: "The whole world is God's great vineyard. The cities and villages constitute a part of that vineyard. These must be worked." White went on to recount, "The heavenly

[24] Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p.511-12.

Messenger who was with us said, 'Never lose sight of the fact that the message you are bearing is a world-wide message. It is to be given to all cities, to all villages; it is to be proclaimed in the highways and the byways. You are not to localize the proclamation of the message.'"[25]

Ellen White's description of the dream stands in marked tension with her initial understanding of its immediate applicability. The divine messenger in the dream clearly indicated that the Adventist message was of world-spanning application, carrying the unmistakable implication of globalization. But at that moment, in the Bay Area, what she seemed to take from that dream was that the Adventists should not be intimidated by American cities. Her setting and situation clearly affected her understanding of the divine message, which at the time failed to register this as a call to international outreach or textual translation. Contrast this to her understanding of the comparable vision that came nine months later, in early January, 1875. White was ill with the flu, bedridden, in Battle Creek, Michigan, for the dedication of the new Adventist college there. She was brought into the parlor of the home to address the leaders who had gathered there and she began to pray in weak, raspy tones when suddenly her voice became sharp and clear and she started to exclaim the words that had become the telltale signs of her visions: *Glory*! and *Darkness*!—a vision so bright, a world so benighted. She saw remarkable things. Over the course of the next few days she told the Adventist leadership that had gathered for the dedication about the contents of her vision. The essence of the epiphany was that the Adventists needed to have a broader, more expansive understanding of God's work. According to one of the leaders who heard her speak of it, her vision showed that "the time was not far distant when we should send ministers to many foreign lands….and that there would be in many places a work of publishing the present truth." By this account, White declared that "she had seen printing presses running in many foreign lands, printing periodicals, tracts, and books containing truths regarding the sacredness of the Sabbath, and the soon coming of Jesus."[26]

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[25] White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 34-36.

[26]Description and quotations from Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1986) 460-62.

Many was the word of the moment. The scale and scope of Adventist work had been sorely underestimated.

Strikingly, the essential substance of the visionary messages between the spring of 1874 and the winter of 1875 had seemed largely the same. In both cases the divine command was to break out of provincialism and rise to global significance of the message. But in April, to Ellen and her surrounding circle, that meant that Adventist preachers should not be afraid of St. Louis and Seattle. By January, it meant something more, as she saw printing presses whirling away in many foreign lands. Why, in mere months, had the meaning changed from a move into urban centers to a call to the whole of humanity? Whence came the envisioned printing presses? Circumstantial evidence suggests the possibility that an encounter with the need for translation seemed to open up new understandings of the work's visionary reach into the world.

It is interesting to note that in September of 1874—right in between the two events—an issue of the newly established and soon-to-shutter journal *The True Missionary*, under the editorship of Stephen Haskell, published a letter from a missionary in Mexico who had recently embraced the Sabbath message. In Haskell's summary, the correspondent reported that among Spanish-speaking seekers "there is the same interest to investigate the Sabbath trust as is manifest among other tongues" and she expressed "a strong desire for tracts in that language." Picking up on this September letter in *The True Missionary*, and editorializing on it further in the *Review and Herald* that November, Haskell noted that such a plea should be added to the growing calls for translation coming from Europe. The question for Haskell was whether there was any evidence that God was preparing the way for such translations to happen.[27]

Using a phrase usually associated with prophetic calls in scripture, Haskell wrote of the question of a Spanish translation: "We knew of no one that was able to translate or that had any burden to do it. But while we were contemplating what was to be done, and yet having no light in this direction, news comes from the Pacific Coast that an educated Spaniard has embraced the truth, and is anxious to translate some of our publications into his

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[27] S.N. Haskell, "A Singular Co-Incidence," *Review and Herald*, 17 November 1874, p.165.

native tongue. Thus, while upon one hand God gives the spirit of inquiry, upon the other hand the providence of God seems to be preparing the way to meet the emergency. With ardent desire we look forward to the time when not only the French, the Swede, the Dane, the German, and the Spaniard, will have publications in their native language, but every nationality where God's people are, will have the privilege of reading present truth in their native tongue. Such circumstances we expect will come to light more and more. It should be the anxiety' of every heart to stand where we can tell when good comes, and be ready to walk in the opening providence of God, and co-operate with the Spirit of God in the triumphant march of present truth."[28] The dynamics of this development are quite telling: evangelistic work among a domestic immigrant population combined with initial evangelizing efforts beyond the borders of the United States to open up the possibility of the present truth being pronounced in many languages. Six weeks later, Ellen White had her vision of whirling printing presses in many lands. As the community confronted the issue of translation, Ellen White's vision of the work of present truth enlarged.

Conclusion

Whether Ellen White changed and expanded her interpretation of these visionary images because the growing linguistic diversity in her movement brought new needs to light, or whether God granted her new light in a timely intervention for which the movement was recently prepared, the conclusion for this study is the same: diversities of language helped shape the content and comprehension of her prophetic messages—expanding their meaning—and a confrontation with the question of translation illuminates that intersection especially well. The relationship between the correspondence from the field and the revelatory experience of a prophet may be causal, or it may merely be coincident, but either way it was complementary. Rather than seeing the encounter with linguistic, cultural, and geographical diversity as a problem that revelation had to overcome—a viewpoint that, as we have seen, had significant intellectual purchase in the late nineteenth century—the Adventist approach

[28] Ibid.

saw these things as full of potential opportunity for the expansion and refinement of inspired understanding. That complementarity points to important elements of Adventist thought about the nature being in relation to time and space, offering clues about an Adventist ontology.

Admittedly, the history of early Adventist translation efforts may seem rather inconsequential in a historiographical sense—perhaps a matter of merely antiquarian interest or a statement about the obvious. Of course they would translate, we might say, so why should we care? But there are, it seems, in that still under-analyzed history, revealing clues about an Adventist way of being in the world. The strong commitment to translate was intertwined with the notion that the encounter with linguistic difference could enhance rather than diminish the comprehension of divine truth, which was related to the idea that human beings were products of historical circumstance by divine design. This Adventist ontology—with its particular combination of timeless truths and particular perspectives—was both distinctive to the movement and reflective of the competing concepts of being that vied for in the nineteenth century. This point becomes much clearer—perhaps it becomes only truly visible—when situating Ellen White in comparative relation to other religious leaders of her day. After all, another prophetic figure chose to resist the allure of translation, and in their differences on translation lay nothing less than differing conceptions of divine purpose and human existence in a diverse world.

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Naked in the Garden of the Past: Is There a Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of History?

by
Nicholas Miller

"Historians walked in the Garden of Eden, without a scrap of philosophy to cover them, naked and unashamed before the God of history. Since then we have known Sin and experienced a Fall."

Edward H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 21. Commenting on 19th century historians in general.

Introduction

Conventional historical wisdom describes the evolution of church history as proceeding from a providentialist, confessional outlook, to one that is based on an objective, critical, detached view on the past. While contemporary scholars generally agree that pure objectivity is impossible, most historians retain the modernist propensity to believe that personal biases and prejudices should be bracketed as far as humanly possible, especially religious ones. The mark of truly modern history, it is proposed, is the embrace of a philosophical methodological naturalism.

This philosophy, it is argued, will limit the historian to natural, as opposed to supernatural causes, and cause her to use empirical observation and critical inquiry to examine, interrogate, and organize historical sources. This philosophically self-aware critical distancing allows the historian, in Carr's evocative quote above, to move away from the Edenic naivety of believing in a natural epistemological objectivity, where one can simply collect facts from the past, and arrange them in self-evident array.

The "fallen" historian, in Carr's account, is aware of his own biases and inclinations, as well as that of his sources, and will achieve some level of critical engagement and analysis because of this. The knowledge of our "sin" will cause us to compensate for it with the tools of critical history, and we can emerge with a version of history that is largely cleansed from our personal biases and superstitions. (What biases systems of critical history might have is another question that we will deal with further later on.)

An Adventist Philosophy of History?

Adventist historian Gary Land, in probably the most complete and helpful overview of Adventist historiography to date (despite it being written over fifty years ago) traces the evolution of Adventist history writing. He notes the shift from "memoirs, apologetics, and story books," written in a providentialist framework, to "the emergence of a scholarly approach to the Adventist past" in recent years.[1] Land describes the emergence of a sense of professional, scholarly history in Adventism as coinciding with the rise of *Spectrum* magazine in the 1970s, where a number of scholars began to look more critically at Ellen White's writings. In a series of *Spectrum* articles, questions were raised about her use of sources, as well as her "intellectual and social milieu and her own intellectual development."[2]

These early efforts to engage more critically with Mrs. White were generally resisted, according to Land, by the White Estate. Matters really came to a head with the publication in 1976 of Ronald Numbers *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*. Land notes that in his preface, Numbers revealed that "he did not presuppose inspiration or ignore witnesses who rejected Ellen White as inspired."[3] Land was being rather generous in his assessment of Numbers' position. What Numbers actually wrote was that "I have tried to be as objective as possible. Thus, I have refrained from using divine inspiration as an historical explanation."[4]

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[1] Gary Land, "From Apologetics to History: The Professionalization of Adventist Historians," *Spectrum*, 10 (March 1971), 89.
[2] Ibid., 93.
[3] Ibid., 93.
[4] Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), xv.

So, rather than merely not "presupposing" inspiration as Land suggests, Numbers actually "presupposed" the opposite—that inspiration was not a possible explanation. Once this assumption regarding the non-reality of inspiration was in place, everything else in Number's book inevitably followed. Suddenly, rather than just not ignoring witnesses who questioned or rejected Mrs. White's inspiration, these witnesses become, by definition, the tellers of truth about her work. Because inspiration is not an accepted category, her life had to be explained through some sort of psychological disorder. Numbers and his wife, a clinical psychologist, propose "somatization disorder with an accompanying histrionic personality style," previously known as hysteria, as one explanation. Mrs. White's visions "shrink to mere epiphenomena" and are ultimately explained as "self-hypnotic episodes."[5]

In a paradoxical flip, Numbers tried to correct the Adventist story that assumed the truth of the prophet and her supporters, with a story that assumed the falsity of her central claims and assumed the truth of her opponents. Rather than a move to objectivity, it was in reality a move to an alternate, competing ideology and apologetic of methodological naturalism.

In discussing the Number's episode, Land, in my opinion, overlooks Number's underlying commitment to a closed, materialistic outlook on reality. Land concludes that Number's book "made clear" the problem that "the church could not live easily with attempts to understand Adventism, particularly Ellen White, within its historical context and on the basis of critically re-examined and more extensive documentation."[6] But this is to mis-state or at least understate the Church's problem with Numbers, as well as Number's problem with the Church, the Bible, and indeed the concept of the supernatural.

It is true that most religious bodies exist in uneasy tension with attempts at close historical scrutiny of the context and culture of their origins. This is simply an unavoidable by-‑‑product, in my opinion, of the epistemological tensions found at the border of faith and reason. Adventists, and any other faith communities that believe in divine revelation, must wrestle with the contours of this boundary. We certainly have not always handled that tension

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[5] Ibid., 212, 214.
[6] Land, 95.

perfectly or ideally. There is much for historians and other scholars to critique and propose in seeking a more faithful balance between these two worlds and ways of knowing.

But Numbers is asking for far more than this. If it were just a case of taking historical context more seriously and examining documents more closely and critically, most Adventist historians that I know would have no objection. Indeed, this is what most of us aspire to do. But to abandon or deny the category of divine inspiration, and by extension any category of the supernatural, is something that Adventist historians simply cannot do and remain Adventist, or even Christian, historians. Numbers may well respond that Adventist historians have to choose, then, between their faith and church, and their profession.

Historiography within the Context of Faith

However, in contrast to what Numbers may believe, there are many very good, practicing historians working at both religious and secular universities that would differ with his analysis. These historians would argue that Numbers' position is one that equally involves faith commitments to a metaphysical framework that is no less "religious" than the one he believes he has escaped from.

The British philosopher of history and Oxford professor, R.G. Collingwood, identified one central problem with the version of naturalistic, critical history espoused by Numbers, which is really a version of the critical, scientific history proposed by F.H. Bradley in 1874.[7] As Collingwood notes, Bradley combined critical methods of inquiry, which were in themselves unobjectionable, with "uncriticized and unnoticed positivistic assumptions."[8]

In other words, it is not wrong to question the claims made on the face of historical documents by writers and witnesses from the past. There must be some critical engagement with the testimony of the past, even if just to sort out conflicting claims and observations. We do bring some sort of criteria to bear to determine if we think that a historical witness is reliable, accurate, and truthful in his or her claims and observations.[9] But what

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[7] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Rev. Ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 135.

[8] Ibid., 136.

[9] Even here, we must be careful of bringing an unremitting skepticism to bear on the claims and observations of historical witnesses. Some treat witnesses from the past, especially religious ones, as subject to an assumption of falsity unless

Collingwood was critical of was Bradley's assumption that only testimony that accords and can be verified by our own experience can be believed. He noted that Bradley's attempt to insert scientific standards into historical knowledge was "where the positivism of his age begins to infect his thought."[10]

The essential problem with this anti—supernatural positivism is that it is internally incoherent. As Collingwood succinctly puts it:

> One the one side, it claims that scientific thought reveals to us laws of nature to which there cannot be exceptions; on the other, it holds that this revelation is based on induction from experience, and therefore cannot give us universal knowledge that is more than probable. Hence in the last resort the attempt to base history on science breaks down; for although there might be facts which are inconsistent with the laws of nature as we conceive them (that is, miracles might happen), the occurrence of these facts is so improbable that no possible testimony would convince us of it. This impasse really wrecks the whole theory; as what is true in the extreme case of miracles is true in principle of any event whatever.[11]

In other words, science, which is built on induction and the observation of the particular, by its very nature, cannot generate absolute laws that should cause us to reject testimony about unusual events out of hand. The principle that Bradley tries to bring into history would, if taken to its logical conclusion, cause us to doubt any and all events we had not experienced, thus making historical knowledge, other than one's own memory, impossible.

More recently, Brad Gregory, who formerly taught history at Stanford University before moving to the University of Notre Dame, has critiqued the secular critical approach to history

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there are particular indicia of truthfulness, such as corroborative evidence or they are making statements against their own interest. Yet, as detectives and lawyers know, most people attempt to tell the truth most of the time (whether they are quite accurate in doing so is another question, but relates to their perceptions and abilities, and not to their intents and motives.) Even liars have to tell the truth most of the time, or their lies will not be successful. Rather than a presumption of untruth, historical witness should be given a presumption of truthfulness, subject to indicia of deception, such as contrary evidence or testimony, evidences of untrustworthiness, and evident bias or specific motives to deceive.

[10] Ibid., 139.

[11] Ibid., 139.

because of its usual manner of reducing religion to purely secular, non-transcendent categories. Critiquing the kind of philosophical approach that Numbers' brought to his study of Ellen White, Gregory writes that "religion *has* to be reducible to some combination of humanly constructed phenomena, because there is nothing else for it to be." Having denied a possible category of divine inspiration, visions then cannot be anything other than one's socially constructed desires and ambitions visually invoked in some kind of self-hypnotic trance.

This use of only secular categories, Gregory notes, is itself a faith approach, of sorts—an approach that cannot result in findings that are contrary to the commitments on which it is founded. As he puts it, "the reductionist study of religion has paradoxically produced a new form of confessional history—a secular confessional history." There are two problems for the Christian historian with this secular confessional history that, under the guise of neutrality and objectivity, actually promotes "a metaphysically naturalistic, materialist and atheistic approach to religion."[12]

First, it prevents historians from understanding religious people on their own terms. If religious people are motivated by religion, and there are good evidences that they are, as especially seen in martyrdom, then we will never understand them, or "get them right" historically if we reduce those beliefs to something else. Second, we have merely replaced a more traditional "faith system," or one that can't be grounded on critical reason, with another system, one that tends to be under-examined and less critically held than other traditional faith systems. This is because secular faith has so permeated the academy that it is taken as background reality, just the "way things are."[13]

There is a third problem with this secular confessional history for Adventist historians that Gregory does not mention. Because of our relatively recent origins, and prophetic heritage, supernatural events and categories are much closer to our working world than for most historians. To eschew supernatural causation is to make it almost impossible to work as believing historians on the history that should be nearest and dearest to us, our own church. In many

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[12] Brad S. Gregory, "Historians' Metaphysical Beliefs and the Writing of Confessional Histories," *Fides et Historia* 43:2 (Summer/Fall 2011), 11.
[13] Ibid., 12.

ways it is especially incumbent on us to, as Adventist Christian scholars, articulate a principled pathway that allows us to speak both to the academy as scholarly historians, and to our church as faithful historians.

Thus far I have been most concerned with the threat to Adventist history and identity by the secular confessional left. But there is an equally problematic threat from an uncritical, fideist, confessional right. Uncritical fideism threatens to unmoor the Church's history from that of both larger Christian and western history, and to place it in a kind of alternate historical reality to which non-Adventists have no connection. This may heighten our collective sense of uniqueness and special identity, but it will severely hamper our outreach and apologetic efforts.

If allowed to flourish, fideist history will cause us to lose common ground and bridge-building contacts with outsiders. We are already seeing this kind of "special, insider history" gaining ground in conservative circles of the Church. Videos and DVDs of conspiracy views of history filled with fantastic and absurd claims about history being controlled by tiny elite groups such as the Masons, the Illuminati and Jesuits have a cult-like following in certain church circles.

This problem of fantastic insider history is not unique to the Adventist church, but has plagued the church ever since the gnostic gospel stories of Christ animating clay birds and punishing playmates. The miracles of the martyrs and saints of the early church and Middle-Ages contained much that the Protestant reformers recognized to be fantastic and fictional. Of course, they sorted these stories out by religious affiliation, or doctrinal orthodoxy. If you held to false beliefs, then your stories must not be true. But the modern Christian views these criteria as a form of special pleading, and allows that God can work, indeed must work, through imperfect, doctrinally errant, human beings.

So the challenge remains, what philosophy of history can an Adventist historian maintain that will allow for the possibility of genuine miracles and inspiration, but will maintain principled boundaries against fantastic and fideist histories that isolate the church from the real world and open its members to deceptive teachings? Is there any one approach that can accomplish this goal? Or may it be necessary for Adventist historians to use a complementary array of philosophical approaches, depending on for whom they are writing? The remainder of this paper will

attempt to set out a spectrum of approaches that are available for Adventist historians to consider as they carry out their work.

Approaches to History

We have already discussed two opposite, yet related approaches to history, the secular confessional approach and the fideist confessional approaches. Both of these views can be described as "closed" in important ways. The secular confessional approach is closed to the possibility of non-material causes. This itself is a metaphysical, faith position. Further, those holding this position are often closed to the idea that religious ideas and beliefs can be causative at all. The secular approach often reduces religion and religious beliefs to psychology, politics, economics, social class, or other secular criteria.

The fideist approach, on the other hand, is closed to using critical methods on the "insider" community, whatever it is, whether Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Adventist or other. It is also, sometimes, closed to the possibility of non-material causes in "outsider" communities. Hence, many Christians who believe in the miracles and resurrection of Christ believe that Joseph Smith and his stories about ghostly visitors and golden plates are a fraud, because Mormonism's theology is, they believe, heterodox. Catholics and Protestants tend to disbelieve in the miracle stories of each other, much for the same reason.

The obvious weaknesses of these two extremes make them inappropriate for use by Christian historians seeking to be faithful to their profession, which is an exploration of God's second book, and their faith in a God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all His children. So let us set up a spectrum of views, with these two unacceptable, closed confessional alternatives at either extreme. What options might we have in the middle of this spectrum of views? I would propose at least three. I will call them open critical, apologetic, and critical confessional. The chart below places them in relation to each other and the two previously discussed extremes.

General Revelation <---------->Special Revelation

1. Closed secular confessional	2. Open Critical History	3. Critical Apologetic	4. Critical Confessional	5. Closed fideist Confessional
Numbers, *Prophetess of Health;* Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: Joseph Smith Biography*	George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*; Mark Noll, *America's God;* Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*	Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*: *Joseph Smith;* Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation,* F.D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*	Noll, *Christ and the Life of the Mind* Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* Adventist Classic Library Series, careful denominational history and mission books.	Butler's *Lives of the Saints*; conspiracy versions of history; Protestant and Catholic fantasy stories of Wartburg Castle; careless denominational history and mission story books.

Although this grouping may not be exhaustive of the philosophical issues involved in historiography, it presents a good representation appropriate for the present purposes. Importantly, it should not be seen as a spectrum moving from secular to religious, as though more religiously committed people will work on projects toward the right side. Rather, as one moves from the left side of the chart to the right, one moves from the world of general revelation to special revelation. Christians care about both avenues to truth, and should be found working in any of the categories, except the two extremes. The further one is left, the more likely it is that one's writing will speak to Christians of other churches and larger society.

As one moves right, one's writings will become more and more for the edification of the Christian community, and then especially for one's own church or denomination. I will briefly describe each of the three middle positions, and then conclude with a brief discussion of how Adventist historians can use these categories to most effectively use their skills and talents to both reach the world and edify the church.

To help explore these different views of history, I will draw on a visit that I took to Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany, which is associated with some dramatic historical events. The Wartburg Castle is the spot where Luther was secretly protected for the year following the confrontation at the Diet of Worms. In Luther's day the Castle was already ancient, and was connected with other well-known figures of history. The most prominent was probably St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, a wife of the Castle ruler who died at the young age of 24. Before her death, however, she developed a widespread reputation for acts of kindness, charity, and even healing, which led to her being sainted after her death.

One legend has it that she was discouraged by her husband from taking food to the villages, but she persisted in the practice. One day she was traveling down to the town with food under her cloak, and she unexpectedly met her husband returning from a hunting trip. He asked her what she had under her cloak, and she wordlessly moved it aside, revealing a bunch of roses. Some accounts have this happening in winter, making it all the more startling and miraculous. The husband is so impressed with this miracle, it is reported, that he repents of his stinginess, and supports his wife in her acts of charity. The event has been memorialized in a huge painting on the walls of the City hall of Eisenach.

Of course there are also legendary stories connected with Luther and Wartburg. One of these stories claims that one day as he was writing and translating the Bible into German, he was distracted by the devil, and threw an inkpot at him across the room. The pot hit the wall, and shattered, leaving an inkblot on the wall, which some claim could be seen there until very recently. Other stories also became associated with Luther, especially after his death, including the claim that walls upon which his picture were hung would not burn.

Now, these two stories would be treated in rather predictable ways by the extreme categories on the left and right. The secular

confessionalists would reject them all without needing to examine documentation or evidence, as they all violate the rule requiring material causes. Perhaps they would be open to the possibility of an inkblot on a wall coming from a thrown ink pot, but the larger story surrounding it would be rejected, or at least recast as a playing out of Luther's internal paranoia. But the story of St. Elizabeth, where food becomes roses and supernatural healings occur, would be outright rejected, not because of poor documentation or sources, but just because these things could not, and cannot, happen.

The fideist confessionalist would approach these stories differently, but predictably, depending on their faith commitments. The Catholic fideist would, by in large, embrace the stories about St. Elizabeth, the Catholic saint; Protestant fideists would be very open to stories of the miraculous about Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer. Given the venerable tradition in most denominational sources, many fideists would accept the story of their particular religious tradition without much, if any, examination, and reject that of their opponents as obvious fables. But what about the other groups?

2. Open Critical History

This category uses the tools of critical history, but would remain open to the possibility of non-material and even transcendent causes, but without making particular claims of such causes in particular cases. This is much like what Grant Wacker, former president of the American Society of Church History, describes as a "principled agnosticism." This allows the historian to say "I am not sure exactly what happened, but the claim might be true, and unless there is an obvious reason to discount the witnesses' testimony as dishonest or deluded, I am content to leave it that way."[14] This approach would involve a certain amount of reporting, rather than necessarily seeking ultimate explanations. It is open to allowing for mysteries that the tools of history cannot grasp, and doesn't then try to draw a complete history as if those mysteries did not exist or were not possible.

This approach allows for what Wacker calls a "belief inflected" approach to history. Because the transcendent is left at least open,

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[14] Grant Wacker, "Another Tool in the Toolbox: Uses (and Misuses) of Belief---Inflected History," *Fides et Historia* 44:1 (Winter/Spring 2012), 74.

the historian is then able to take religious beliefs seriously, both his own, as well as those of historical actors. Again, this category does not make claims about what or which religious beliefs might be true. Rather, it argues that people hold religious beliefs and pursue them in way that impacts their own decisions, as well as the society they live within. Religious beliefs do not become reducible to other concerns, such as political, economic, racial or social.[15]

In approaching the stories of St. Elizabeth and Martin Luther, the Open Critical historian would examine the age and provenance of the stories regarding the miraculous events, and decide as a historical matter whether there is reliable evidence to support the historicity of the stories. Ultimately, however, she will not be so much concerned with passing judgment on them, as to whether they did or did not occur. Rather, the focus will be on the beliefs and motives of those passing them along, how they help us understand the religious mind-set and beliefs of those that originated them as well as those that spread them.

This category of history creates a greater chance for historians to approach historic religious actors with sensitivity and understanding and cause them to be more open to the impact that religion qua religion can have on larger society. Many of the books on religious history by Mark Noll, George Mardsen, and Nathan Hatch fall into this open critical category. They discuss and analyze the impact of many religious people and events connected with claims of the supernatural, such as the Great Awakenings, accounts of conversion and revival, and even claims of miraculous healings and visions. They generally do not pass on the historicity or factualness of these claims, either positively or negatively, but rather examine the impact and influence on larger society of those that did believe in them. Their "openness" on the issues of supernatural, however, causes them not to "have" to come up with or manufacture some natural, material explanation for all events.

All these authors have been lauded by secular publications and historians as providing powerful insights into America's past, both religious and cultural. Their work has been reviewed in a broad

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[15] One of the best collection of essays exploring the importance of taking seriously religious beliefs in the history of ideas is Alister Chapman, John Coffey, Brad Gregory, eds. *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

array of secular journals and publications not only favorably, but often to great acclaim and praise.[16] Marsden's biography of Jonathan Edwards won the prestigious Bancroft prize awarded by Columbia University for the writing of American history.[17]

In these works Noll, Marsden and Hatch have not made bold claims of theological or spiritual truth or otherwise taken risks that would antagonize the prevailing secular critical culture in the academy. They have stayed close to the evidence and made only factual claims that secular historians could either readily agree to, or at least not object to in principle. Their religious perspectives have almost entirely been given over to helping frame the historical questions to ask, providing insights into the religious motivations of people in the past, and otherwise seeing religion as an important part of the historical story. This is close to the position that Gary Land seems to advocate for religious historians, when he proposes that Christian historians should play close attention to the "Christian understanding of man and ethics," as well as "the significance of the Christian religion."[18]

In principle, however, all these things could be done by non---religious historians. Perry Miller and the *New England Mind* is a good example of an agnostic historian using this approach to uncover religion as an influential category in history.[19] But still, the practical reality is that a deep commitment to the closed system of only material causes generally causes one to try to fill in blanks on the historical map with material, secular explanations, no matter how unlikely the fit. (A knock on the head or self-

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[16] For reviews of Noll's *America's God*, see *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (October 2003), pp. 1144-1145; *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Sep., 2004), pp. 595-597; *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Spring, 2005), pp. 651-652; *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Jul., 2004), pp. 539-544; for reviews of Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity,* see *American Studies International,* Vol. 29, No. 2 (October 1991), pp. 113-114.

[17] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bancroft_Prize.

[18] Land, 97.

[19] Still, it took a religiously sensitive Harry Stout to see the continuities in New England culture where Miller had only seen endings and discontinuities. Stout's *The New England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), showed that the New England Puritan mind persisted if one looked for its influence on more spiritual matters, and asked questions about not just mind, but spirit and soul. Could an atheist have done this as well? Possibly, but one tends to be more sensitive to historical possibilities that are real in one's own life.

induced hypnotic visions caused a sickly young lady with a third-grade education to become the most widely-published woman author in history and the founder of the most widespread Protestant medical system in the world.) An overtly skeptical approach makes one more generally suspicious of alleged religious motivations. Every preacher is a likely, or at least potential, Elmer Gantry, every visionary a budding pious swindler, all seeking to advance fame, fortune, or political ambition under the guise of religion.

But of equal importance, the success in the secular academy of Marsden, Noll, Hatch and others writing from religiously sympathetic perspectives has been obtained even while they wrote books of a far more religiously apologetic and even confessional nature. Land does not seem to acknowledge these categories in his article, and as Adventists we need to be aware of these possibilities. It is to these more profoundly religious categories that we now turn.

3. Critical Apologetic

The Critical Apologetic category differs from the Open Critical view perhaps more in tone than in substance. It is a Critical view with an agenda to argue for the existence and importance of non-materials causes, motives, or categories. The Open Critical view leaves open the questions of non-material cause, and generally does not seek to advocate or speculate what those non-material causes might be. The Critical Apologetic, by contrast, engages the non-believer or skeptic in an argument for the existence of non-material causes and motives, and perhaps even a particular kind of non-material cause, e.g., an intelligent designer, or the Holy Spirit, or a vision-giving angel.

But the apologetic argument is made using only observations and evidences open to all, without reliance on the authority of any sort of special revelation, like claims of scripture, or visions, angelic voices, or faith experiences. This is what separates it from the third category, the critical confessional, which makes arguments and claims from the category of special revelation itself.

The critical apologist still examines sources critically, and only uses evidence and arguments open to scrutiny by outsiders and non-believers. But it uses these evidences and arguments to support larger claims about a spiritual or non-material world, or

the comparative worth of a confessional cause. One form this category takes is the insider perspective—seeking to reveal the internal experiences of believers in order to understand them, not to question the authenticity or factuality of the historical claims of the religion.

A recent example of this "experiential" writing with apologetic flair is Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. Bushman, a former professor of history at Columbia University, is a practicing Mormon, who in his *Rough Stone* attempts to write for both Mormons and outsiders. As he put it, it is not that the reader must "believe," but that the aim of the book is to explain "to a reader what it was like to believe." In doing this, he avoided "injecting naturalistic explanation that reduces Smith's extraordinary experiences to commonplace psychological happenings." He offers a sort of division of labor; "others can offer explanations; I provide understanding."[20]

Bushman defends his approach, in part, on the grounds that to reject Joseph Smith's supernatural stories is to reject an understanding of millions of Mormons who have guided their lives by them. This seems perhaps an inadequate justification, however, to support an "insider" perspective history. Bushman is not studying the history of Mormon belief about Smith, or the mindset of Mormonism generally, but the life of Joseph Smith himself.

In setting out Smith's story as he does, assuming the truth of claims of miracle and supernatural, Bushman engages in an apologetic for Smith's view of the world, or at least a defense of Smith's conduct and actions given in light of his belief that these things happened. Again, the reader does not have to believe, but he is asked to suspend disbelief, so as to understand, and ultimately empathize. This is, it seems to me, a kind of apologetic, and has been noted as such by others.[21]

Bushman's work, it seems to me, opens the door to similar projects on Ellen White, such as the recent one with Oxford University Press, *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*,[22] that

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[20] Richard Lyman Bushman, "Mormon History Inside Out," *Fides et Historia,* 43:2 (Summer/Fall 2011), 4.

[21] Author Larry McMurtry says that in reading Bushman, it is difficult to determine "where biography ends and apologetics begins." Larry McMurtry, "Angel in America," *New York Review of Books*, November 17, 2005, 35-37.

[22] Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

that would introduce her to a much wider audience in a sympathetic, yet accessible way.[23]

Francis D. Nichol, the Adventist editor and author, engaged in a related practice in portions of his book *Answers to Objections*. This book dealt with various negative claims and objections to Adventism, and attempted to answer many of them on reasoned, rational grounds. Did many of the Millerites go insane? No. Did they make ascension robes and wait on hilltops? No. Did they plant crops and fail to harvest them, losing them to winter weather? No. All the answers are taken from historical records, such as newspaper stories and other public reports. Nichol attempts to cast the Millerites in a favorable light, using standard historical evidence, stories about religious believers and their beliefs, in an attempt to put those believers and beliefs in a favorable light for apologetic purposes.[24]

Another recent example of this kind of apologetic from the Catholic side of the aisle is Brad Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation*. In this book, Gregory uses material, standard, historical evidence to make rather massive claims about historical causation regarding the impact of confessional, doctrinal beliefs on society. There is no evidence that Gregory examines and considers that it takes special faith or belief in non---material causes or categories (well, apart from the importance of ideas in history, but ideas are not generally considered somehow inherently transcendent). But the burden of his work is to argue that the confessional belief system of Protestantism, which is not reducible to material categories or causes, has had a major and negative impact on the development of modern, western civilization—essentially causing, among other maladies, the Hyper-materialistic, individualistic, and consumeristic capitalism that is eroding both modern human spirit and the ozone layer, threatening both human and environmental catastrophe.

The implications of Gregory's work, both unstated and stated, is that various values of the medieval Catholic church, in regards

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[23] Bushman's book was critically, yet favorably, reviewed in the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times Book Review*. Jane Lampman, "He founded a church and stirred a young nation," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 17, 2005; Walter Kirn, *New York Times Book Review*, January 15, 2006, 14-15.

[24] Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections: An Examination of the Major Objections Raised Against the Teachings of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1932).

to human nature and society, the value of the sacred and transcendent within the material world, and the importance of solidarity over individualism, would make the world a better place. Gregory's kind of argument is more than "open" to the possibility of transcendent categories and causes, but wants to argue that a particular set of transcendent values and categories is better than another set in real world functioning. Perhaps Marsden's book Jonathan Edwards and Noll's book on America's God implicitly make similar kinds of claims, yet the purposes of their books is primarily to tell the story of an individual and a historical era, and not to make a larger argument about the state of our world in relation to transcendent values. If their books accomplish this to some degree, it is a secondary goal and result. With Gregory, it is the reason for the book, as shown in the title, thus making it more reflective, in my view, of the Critical Apologetic rather than the Open Critical category.

How would the Critical Apologetic deal with the issue of St. Elizabeth's Roses and Martin Luther's inkblot? Well, there would probably be a more aggressive examination of the documentary and evidentiary sources underlying both events. What are the age of the first accounts: contemporaneous with the events, years later, or even centuries later? When did they arise: at a moment of canonization or confessional strife? But they would not be ruled out *ab initio* because of the miraculous nature of the stories. But neither would they be accepted because they represented the correct theological or confessional categories. Rather, the Critical Apologist would, beyond the methods of critical history, use reasoning from general revelation to assess certain transcendent claims.

Perhaps Occam's Razor, the principle of causative simplicity, would cause one to suspect that both God and the devil had more efficient ways of accomplishing their purposes than turning good food into roses and lurking in room corners and dodging inkwells. But is there no place for Christian historians to assess the truth or falsity of historical events based on what they believes about the Bible? Must they remain forever mute about the likely truth or falsity of historical events that are not subject to the tools of critical history itself? This is where the third category of Critical Confessional comes in, where the historian puts on a theologian's hat.

4. Critical Confessional

This category moves into the actual world of revealed theology, and will now deal with concepts and categories that are truly faith---based in nature. This can occur in at least three related ways. It may involve taking Biblical concepts and views, and using them as organizing or structuring principles for the study and understanding of history. Mark Noll and George Marsden have done this in various works. Perhaps most notably for Marsden is *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, where he used a variety of Biblical Christian beliefs, including creation, the fall, and redemption to frame a Christian scholar's view of the world and the role of a scholar.[25] Mark Noll does a similar thing in his *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, where he takes the various Christian ecumenical creedal beliefs—such as the incarnation, the human and divine natures of Christ, the trinity—and examines their implications for Christian scholarship in both the humanities and sciences.[26]

Neither Noll nor Marsden use their frameworks to advocate the entry into scholarship of peculiarly Christian concepts such as miracles or prophecy. Rather, they use revealed principles as a basis to argue for the first two categories of critical scholarship, Open and Apologetic. But still, their reliance on revealed theological concepts makes these works confessional works, rather than merely apologetic.

Others go further, and use revealed principles to try to understand the possible role of God's providence and judgment in history. A couple of recent works in this area include Steven Keillor's *God's Judgments: Interpreting History and the Christian Faith*[27] and Dan Via's *Divine Justice, Divine Judgment: Rethinking the Judgment of Nations*.[28] Both of these books engage in a study of Biblical principles of God's judgments in history, and then tries to apply these principles to various historical events in American history, including the Civil War and the events of 9/11.

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[25] George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

[26] Mark Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

[27] Steven Keillor, *God's Judgements: Interpreting History and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

[28] Dan Via, *Divine Justice, Divine Judgement: Rethinking the Judgment of Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007).

Such efforts make academics nervous generally, particularly modern historians, who are trying to retain respectability in a scientifically-oriented academy. Nevertheless, respected Christian scholars are treading in these waters (Mark Noll wrote the foreword for Keillor's book; Dan Via is a Professor emeritus at Duke University Divinity School). One would think that Adventist scholars, with their judgment hour message, and with Ellen White's frequent use of the category of judgment in history, would try to help frame a responsible approach to the question of judgment and history, rather than letting zealous, but historically naïve amateurs hold the field, as is generally the case.

Finally, the critical confessional will not only exam whether historical evidence tends to support or refute claims of the miraculous, but also will evaluate those claims from a normative theological framework. In other words, it will both ask whether the documentary evidence, such as witness statements, regarding Joseph's Smith golden plates are historically plausible, in terms of source, provenance, and internal and external coherence, but it will also evaluate the claims of the story in relation to Biblical theology. Thus, one may arrive at the conclusion that non-material causes were involved, but that these were not necessarily consistent with divine intervention or inspiration. Other forces might be at work.

But this kind of critical historical and theological examination should be applied to claims from within our own circles. All denominational books, even story books and mission books not written at a scholarly level, should attempt to handle responsibly, and with a sense of critical inquiry, both historical and theological, stories of miracles and the supernatural. We need to educate our leaders and laity to avoid repeating without question as to source, provenance, and theological balance, whatever fantastic tale is attached to the name of a co-religionist.

Conclusion

Adventist historians should not limit themselves merely to one type of history. I believe we should be training ourselves to write in both category 4, to the community of faith, as well as some combination of categories 2 and 3, to our academic peers and general public. We have both a duty to the church, as well as to the world, to use our training and skills to aid and edify both groups.

We must be apologetic, in using the categories and methods that outsiders can appreciate, as Paul did on Mars Hill in speaking with the Athenian skeptics. But we must also speak to the church, and confess clearly our faith in Jesus Christ and His word. Christian historians also are included in Christ's admonition, "therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." Mt. 10:32.

These audiences may need to be reached in different works. This is not a question of deceit and deception, but rather knowing one's audience. One should not assert something in one venue that one contradicts in another. Rather, the different projects should be complementary. We have examples of fine Christian scholars who have written successfully in all these categories, including Mark Noll, George Marsden, Bradley Gregory, and others discussed above. There is no reason that Adventist scholars cannot do this, and introduce our own history, and especially the amazing contributions of Ellen White to 19th century female leadership, to a broader audience.

Exploring the garden of the past in a way both helpful to the church and convincing to our exterior audiences will require a certain level of philosophical acumen. But the great tradition of Christian thought and philosophy should provide both clothing and even armor to deal with the modern, skeptical philosophies that tend to prevail in modern academia. It is a matter of mentally clothing and equipping ourselves to write history for a new, and more sophisticated, generation of Adventists.

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Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Approaches to Cursive Handwriting Transcription: Lessons from the Blythe Owen Letters Project

by
Jazmyne Lavalas, Marianne Kordas, and Rodney Summerscales

Introduction

Making the contents of an archival collection easily accessible to scholars and a wider public can be a daunting task. There has been a long-standing interest in both the computing and archival communities, however, in using computer-assisted means to facilitate description, access, and innovative analysis of archival collections. This scholarly movement grew out of the field of humanities computing and coalesced under the umbrella term of digital humanities in the early 2000s (Fitzpatrick 2011).

This paper is a case study describing our efforts to use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology to transcribe a select, offline sample of PDF scans of handwritten letters by Dr. Blythe Owen—a prominent Seventh-day Adventist musician, composer, and pedagogue—into text-based documents in order to make the letters more accessible to researchers.

Our study is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on musicology, archival science, software engineering, and the possibilities presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI) programming for its theoretical frameworks. Our goal is to give practical examples of the state of OCR capabilities for archival transcription, and to suggest areas for application and improvement. We offer an overview of why Owen and her correspondence are important to American musicology as well as to Seventh-day Adventist history; a brief history of OCR

applications for offline handwriting recognition problems; and a comparative review of four OCR programs (*Google Cloud Vision, Pen to Print APP, SimpleOCR,* and *Transkribus*) applied to our selected Owen letter dataset. Our project augments, but does not duplicate, the comparative discussion published last year (2021) by Jain, Taneja, and Taneja of sixteen other OCR toolset softwares.

Blythe Owen: Letters of Importance

Born in 1898 in Long Prairie, Minnesota, American pianist and composer Blythe Owen was an accomplished teacher and musician for over seventy years (FamilySearch). Her love of music began early, and she started teaching piano when still a teenager. In 1917 she graduated from the Pacific College Conservatory in Newberg, Oregon; she was subsequently hired to teach piano and other music classes at Walla Walla College, a Seventh-day Adventist school located in College Place, Washington. After marriage and several relocations throughout the United States, Owen moved to Chicago—first in 1926, and then permanently in the late 1930s. (Schultz, Mack, and Kordas 2022). Here she not only studied, taught, performed, and composed, but also connected with other well-known classical musicians of the mid-twentieth century such as composer Florence Price, pianist Rudolf Ganz, and conductor Percy Grainger.

In 1941 Owen received her undergraduate degree in piano performance from Chicago Musical College; a year later, in 1942, she completed a master's degree in composition at Northwestern University. During this period, she taught piano and music theory at several different schools, including Northwestern University, Cosmopolitan House Conservatory, Roosevelt University School of Music, and Chicago Teachers College.

Owen was one of the first women to complete a PhD in composition from the prestigious Eastman School of Music, graduating in 1953. After three decades living in Chicago and surviving via part-time adjunct work, she accepted an offer in 1961 to return to Walla Walla College for full-time employment. She then joined the music faculty of at Andrews University in 1964. She continued to compose and teach privately into her late 90s. She died in Berrien Springs, Michigan in 2000 at the age of 101, leaving behind a legacy of over 150 compositions and numerous accomplished students (Ibid).

Between 1919 and 1963, Owen wrote over 2,000 letters to her mother describing her life as a student, teacher, performer, and composer (Kordas 2021). These items of correspondence illuminate not only Owen's own experiences as a professional musician and a Seventh-day Adventist, but also document the life and works of other artists with whom she interacted. The surviving letters are a valuable source of information for scholars of women in music, American music, Chicago in the twentieth century, and Seventh-day Adventist history in general. Owen's letters are housed along with her other papers—including photographs and manuscripts of her compositions—in the archives of the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University (Collection 186).

Transcribing: The Research Problem

The process of transcribing Owen's original letters into text-based documents began in 2016 with two student research assistants, under the direction of Andrews University's music librarian. The letters are written in Owen's distinctive cursive script. While effective, transcribing a single letter in person into a typed document is time consuming and can take up to two hours per letter (Kordas 2021).

Therefore, we sought other, computer-based solutions for transforming handwritten sources into typed documents. The most commonly used technological approach to handwriting recognition is Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software (Plötz and Fink 2009; Peng et al. 2013; Patel et al. 2012). This type of software is fairly easy to acquire and usually inexpensive. In their 2003 monograph surveying the advancement of handwriting recognition, data scientists Liu, Cai, and Buse note that:

> There are two major problem domains in handwriting recognition: online and offline. In online handwriting recognition, data are collected while they are being generated on a digitizing surface [...] However, in offline handwriting recognition, all that is available to the recognition system is the digitized spatial information, e.g., the image of the address scanned from an envelope or an amount shown on a cheque. As a consequence, online handwriting recognition has a much higher recognition rate as compared to that for the offline case (1).

Thus, with an offline cursive handwriting recognition task such as found in the Owen corpus of letters, common OCR software may not always prove to be successful (Plamondon and Srihari 2000). The challenge is finding OCR software that leverages machine learning technology and was trained on similar datasets (Fitrianingsih et al. 2017; Hämäläine and Hengchen 2019; Drobac and Lindén 2020). Doing so was the main focus of the project documented in this paper: finding cost-effective, widely available OCR software that sufficiently reads and transcribes sources inscribed with handwritten cursive script.

Literature Review: A History of OCR Applications for Handwriting Recognition Problems

The possibilities and challenges of OCR applications for handwriting recognition have both tantalized and frustrated researchers in the various branches of computer and information sciences for over seventy years (Lorette 1999, 4–5; Cheriet et al. 2007, 2–3; Memon et al. 2020).

It is commonly accepted that the field of digital humanities may be seen as starting in 1949, when Father Roberto Busa approached IBM for computing help with his index to the complete works of medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas. Punch cards led to magnetic reels, then to micro-computers, and finally to an internet-based server and website, which can still be searched today at https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/it/index.age (Busa 2004; Priego 2011; Breure 1993, 1–3). Some twenty years later, in 1968, another pioneering computing scholar, Richard Morgan, envisioned being able to batch-load books and other documents into the "maw" of a computer machine enabled with OCR capabilities.

Great strides have been accomplished since then in performing optical character recognition of both text-based and handwritten documents, but many challenges still remain. Indeed, according to computer scientist Ching Y. Suen, "handwriting recognition is known to be one of the most challenging subjects in the field of pattern recognition" (1994, 71). Entire conferences, across many languages and countries, are devoted to finding solutions towards having computers read the intricacies of human handwriting. The most prominent conference in this area of research is the biennial International Conference on Frontiers in Handwriting Recognition, which started in 1990 in Montreal,

Quebec, as the International Workshop on Frontiers in Handwriting Recognition (ICFHR 2022).

The literature on computerized handwriting recognition describes a broad range of applications for OCR techniques in handwriting recognition across a spectrum of areas such as banking, medical records, and historical research (Allen 1987, Agrawal et al. 2020, Komkov 2022). Our project, while drawing from this broader technical knowledge, focused on testing the practical application of OCR software products for handwriting recognition presently available to the average consumer or archivist who may not have a rigorous background in computer and data science. Advanced technical skills, however, are advantageous when undertaking a digital humanities project of the type we discuss here, as even the simplest software we tested did require some data manipulation.

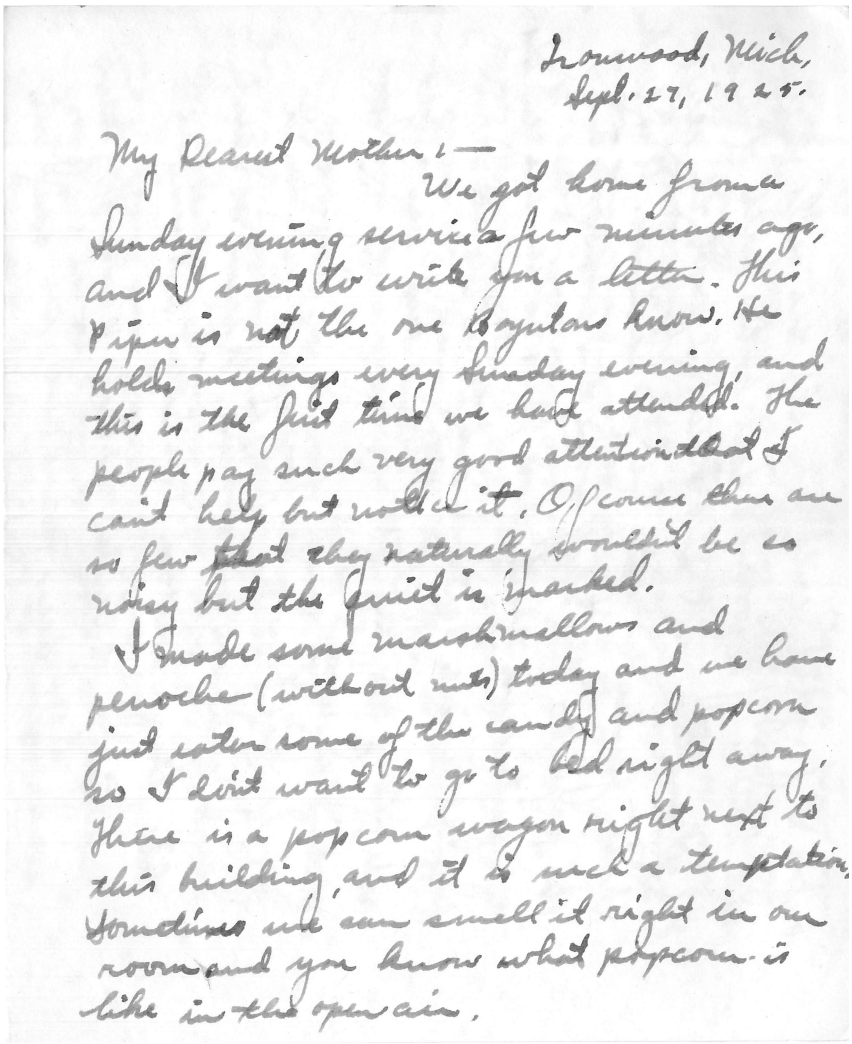
Project Methodology

The first step in our case study of applying OCR techniques to an offline handwriting recognition problem was to conduct both general searches online as well as more targeted searches in journal databases for recommendations and references to currently available OCR software products. Approximately ten to fifteen OCR software products were pre-screened with a scan of one Owen letter. We examined a wide variety of OCR software options, trying to find good results from both free and paid OCRs. When pre-screening which OCRs to test, we looked at the ease of use, accuracy, compatibility with our dataset, and accessibility. The four products that did well in pre-screening— *Google Cloud Vision, Pen to Print APP, SimpleOCR, and Transkribus*—were subsequently fully tested with a larger subset of Owen's complete letters.

Our testing subset consisted of ten randomly selected letters written by Owen across several decades. [1] These letters range from between three to seven pages in length. We used letters that had been already scanned as PDFs, as well as human-transcribed into text documents, in order to generate a clear validation set.

[1] Dates of the ten letters: 1919-10-01, 1919-10-29, 1925-09-27, 1928-05-09, 1933-08-06, 1935-03-17, 1947-09-23, 1944-03-08, 1951-02-11, 1952-01-12. Two letters per decade were used for the section of letters that had been hand-transcribed and could form the validation set.

Throughout this paper we will compare figures that highlight the results between the various OCR applications. Below in **Figure 1** is an image of one of Owen's original letters, dating from September 27, 1925, paired with its human-transcribed text in **Figure 2:**



Ironwood, Mich,
Sept. 27, 1925.

My Dearest Mother:—
We got home from a Sunday evening service a few minutes ago, and I want to write you a letter. This piper is not the one Boyntons know. He holds meetings every Sunday evening and this is the first time we have attended. The people pay such very good attention that I cant help but notice it. Of course there are so few that they naturally wouldn't be as noisy but the quiet is thanked.

I made some marshmallows and penoche (without nuts) today and we have just eaten some of the candy and popcorn so I don't want to go to bed right away. There is a popcorn wagon right next to this building, and it is such a temptation sometimes we can smell it right in our room and you know what popcorn is like in the open air.

FIGURE 1: A scan of Owen's original letter

Ironwood, Mich.
Sept. 27, 1925.

My Dearest Mother: —
We got home from a Sunday evening service a few minutes ago, and I want to write you a letter. This [Piper?] is not the one Boyntons know. He holds meetings every Sunday evening, and this is the first time we have attended. The people pay such very good attention that I can't help but notice it. Of course there are so few that they naturally wouldn't be so noisy but the quiet is marked.
I made some marshmallows and penuche (without nuts) today and we have just eaten some of the candy and popcorn so I don't want to go to bed right away. There is a popcorn wagon right next to this building, and it is such a temptation. Sometimes we can smell it right in our room and you know what popcorn is like in the open air.

FIGURE 2: OCR result of Owen's letter (The "penuche" mentioned in this letter is a fudge-like candy).

Depending on the OCR tested, the requirements for the input file varied. For example, for several OCR options tested, images were the only accepted document type. To solve any specific data manipulation or preparing, some Python coding and packages were used. Once the data was cleaned, it was fed into the four OCR software programs we had selected for full testing.

The produced OCR transcription results were then evaluated against the human-transcribed versions of the ten letters in our dataset to determine the accuracy of the OCR. After this, the OCR was retested on the dataset to see if results could be improved using different capabilities and settings. Once we were satisfied that we had received the best results using a particular OCR, we compared the results with those produced by the other three OCR software product examined in this study. Our accuracy performance metric judged the rate of accuracy based on correct words rather than just alphabetic characters. In all, we fully tested four products, two of which were free, and two of which require payment for long-term, complete functionality.

Results: Free OCRs

SimpleOCR

The first OCR we tested was *SimpleOCR*. This is a free software used for transcribing handwritten as well as machine text. It is offered in both online and downloadable versions.[2] The downloadable version allows for more customizations, including text recognition of several languages, and this was the version used for this project. *SimpleOCR* is primarily designed for segmented scripts, so it was not expected to work very well with our cursive dataset. However, this OCR does have some features that could be used for cursive datasets. The software is user friendly and is built from another common open-source OCR called *Tesseract*.

SimpleOCR offers direct connection to a scanner; it also allows file uploads. However, the uploaded files can only be in the form of images. This caused an extra step of work for our dataset. It is recommended for handwriting recognition that documents consisting of 300–500 words be used for training the OCR. While this OCR does mention having features to help transcribe cursive writing, these features did very little for the performance of this OCR with Owen's letters. Even though this was one of the highest rated free OCRs used in this study, the results produced were still very poor. The accuracy of this OCR was only 13% across all ten documents. While individual characters could be recognized accurately, whole words—and thus the whole document—did not transcribe well, as can be seen in **Figure 3a and Figure 3b**:

[2] https://www.simpleocr.com/

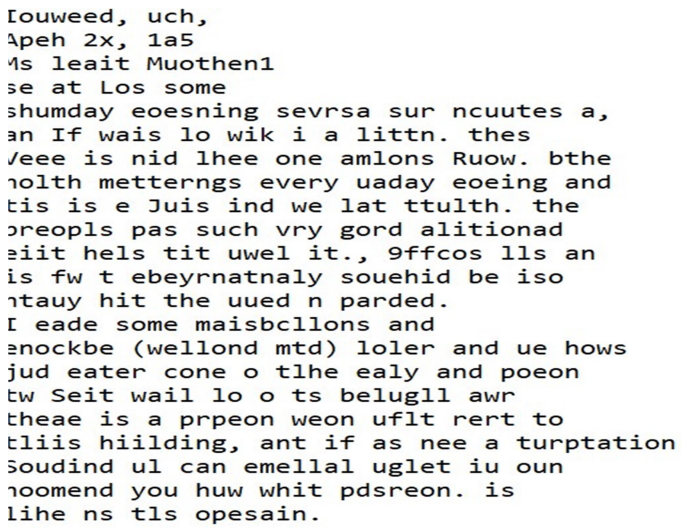


FIGURE 3a: Results of *SimpleOCR* transcription

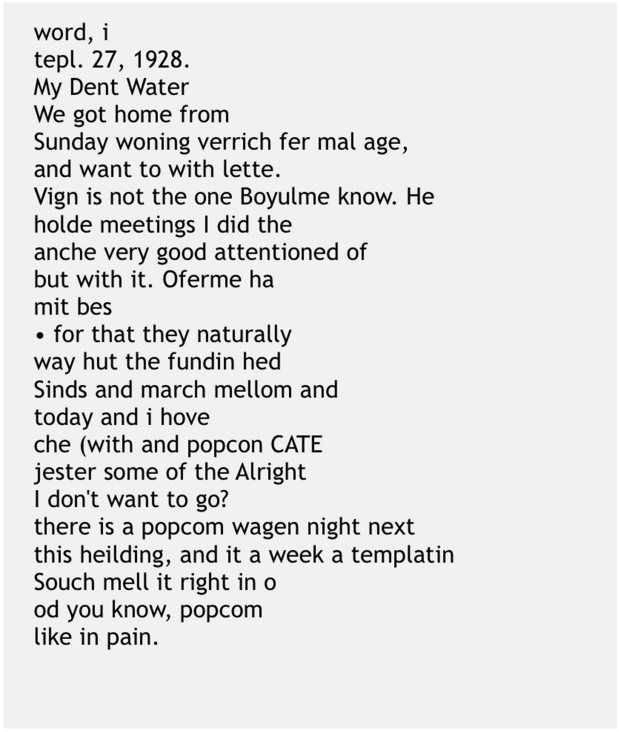


FIGURE 3b: Results of *SimpleOCR* transcription retry

Pen to Print App

The second OCR tested was the *Pen to Print App*. This OCR is an application available for both iOS and Android phones, and was designed as the first phone app to be able to convert images of handwritten notes into texts that can be saved and shared.[3] This product is used mainly for offline handwriting recognition. While it is not available for laptops or desktops from the original developer, combined with other software this can be accommodated.

Its main function is to convert images rather than larger documents in PDF. Separating documents into smaller units and saving them as images (JPEG, PNG, etc.) before processing is a possible solution. This app is free with the option of upgrading to a paid subscription and enables users to process a large amount of data even if that data is in small segments. Overall, the phone app is very user-friendly, allowing for quick transcriptions to take place with very few steps required. This mobile app performed better than expected with our complex dataset. With a sample of the Owen letters broken up into single pages, this OCR produced acceptable results, as illustrated in **Figure 4**.

[3] https://www.pen-to-print.com/

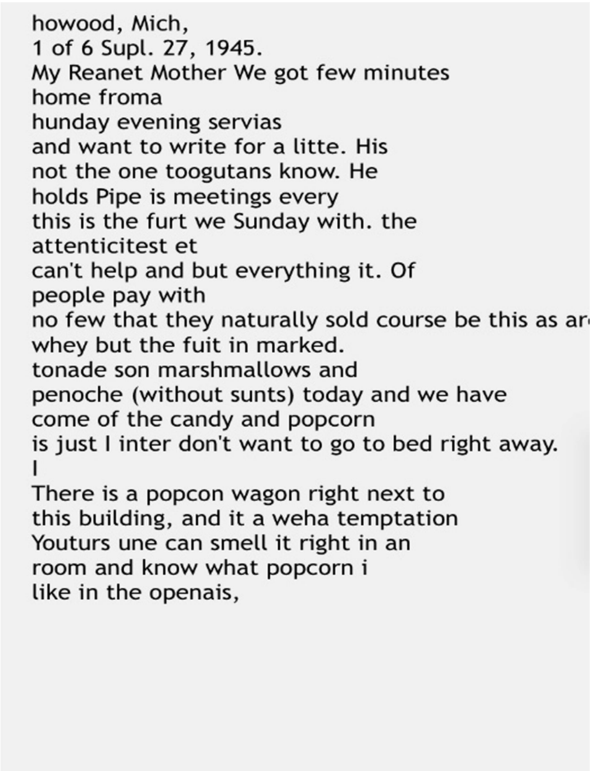

howood, Mich,
1 of 6 Supl. 27, 1945.
My Reanet Mother We got few minutes
home froma
hunday evening servias
and want to write for a litte. His
not the one toogutans know. He
holds Pipe is meetings every
this is the furt we Sunday with. the
attenticitest et
can't help and but everything it. Of
people pay with
no few that they naturally sold course be this as ar
whey but the fuit in marked.
tonade son marshmallows and
penoche (without sunts) today and we have
come of the candy and popcorn
is just I inter don't want to go to bed right away.
I
There is a popcon wagon right next to
this building, and it a weha temptation
Youturs une can smell it right in an
room and know what popcorn i
like in the openais,

FIGURE 4: *Pen to Print* app results

For most of the data, the app's OCR was able to read the documents with few errors. However, these results were not consistent across all the data. In fact, when this OCR did not perform well, the results were quite poor, leading to documents with many errors. Another issue with this application is that users are unable to edit the results of the text file in this application. While using this platform the correction of errors would need to happen post-transcription. Overall, the accuracy for this OCR was 31.7%. While this is still relatively low, it performed twice as well as *SimpleOCR*.

Results: Paid OCRs

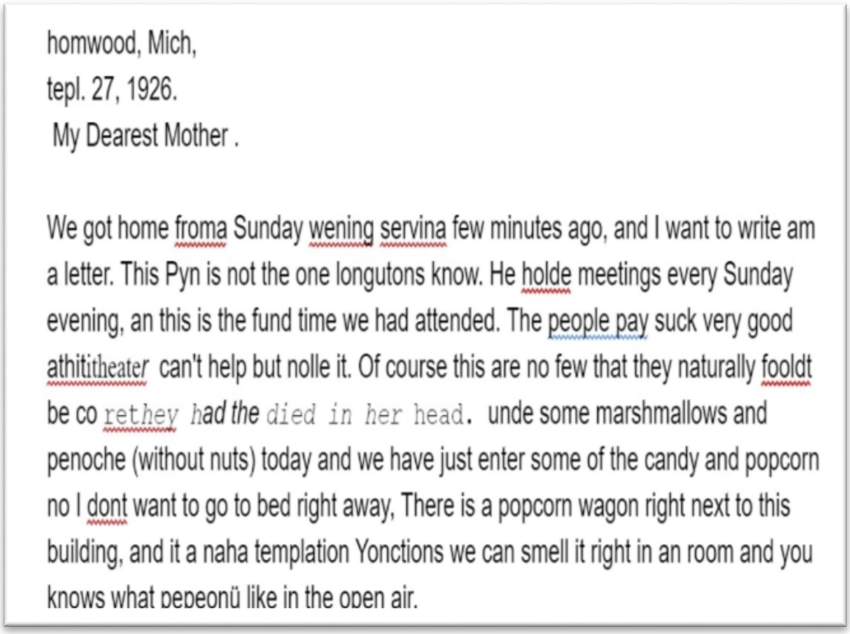
Google Cloud Vision

The third OCR tested is not actually an OCR but an Application Programming Interface (API) with OCR capabilities. This API was

created by Google and is called *Google Cloud Vision AI*.[4] The use of this API is not free long-term, but it does offer a free trial with a set number of credits that can be used monthly. This API offers a wider range of capabilities than all other OCR software evaluated in this paper. It allows for searchable output files and displays more properties of the documents being transcribed. One can search for common themes in literature and the program gives a likeliness score to show what a given document is about. It also gives specific characteristics of the document based on set parameters. For example, with our dataset, the program identified that the documents were letters. It assessed the original quality of the scanned document and recognized that ink was used to write the Owen letters.

While this API offers a wide range of capabilities, it is not recommended for the average user. For best results, *Google Cloud Vision* requires experience with setting up technical environments and proficiency with common programming languages, such as Python. It required the most preparation and cleaning of the dataset before processing, thus causing it to be the most time-consuming software discussed in this paper. The results of this API were somewhat successful, but the resulting documents would need to be checked thoroughly, as shown in **Figure 5.** There were specific nuances of our dataset that did not work well with this API. The accuracy of this OCR was 56.2% across our dataset.

[4] https://cloud.google.com/vision


homwood, Mich,
tepl. 27, 1926.
My Dearest Mother .

We got home froma Sunday wening servina few minutes ago, and I want to write am a letter. This Pyn is not the one longutons know. He holde meetings every Sunday evening, an this is the fund time we had attended. The people pay suck very good athititheater can't help but nolle it. Of course this are no few that they naturally fooldt be co rethey had the died in her head. unde some marshmallows and penoche (without nuts) today and we have just enter some of the candy and popcorn no I dont want to go to bed right away, There is a popcorn wagon right next to this building, and it a naha templation Yonctions we can smell it right in an room and you knows what pepeonü like in the open air.

FIGURE 5: *Google Cloud Vision API* results

Transkribus

Finally, the last and most successful OCR we tested was *Transkribus*.[5] This software specializes in offline handwriting recognition, with its main focus on using AI for text recognition of historical documents. *Transkribus* is relatively easy to use. This software can be used in a browser, or it can be downloaded onto a PC. *Transkribus* is highly customizable, offering recognition not only of several languages but also different eras. Its platform is built around different transcription models trained on several distinct handwriting datasets; this allows a user to select a model that is similar to their own dataset in order to achive the best results.

Transkribus is a paid software and uses credits for each document transformation. Upon registration, users receive 500 free credits; depending on the model needed for a dataset, a credit will typically process a page of data. This software is one of the

[5] https://readcoop.eu/transkribus/

most straightforward OCR tested in this project. Images or PDFs to be transcribed are uploaded into the program. After the original document is processed, the new, transcribed document can be downloaded in several formats including PDF, docx, image, etc. It also offers a text editor for each page, so that transcriptions errors can be corrected before they are downloaded.

With the Owen dataset, we used the *English Handwriting 18th -19th century (2)* model. This model was trained on the manuscripts of a British philosopher. It trained on a sufficiently large dataset which looked similar to the Owen letters. This specific model performed relatively well with our dataset, as seen in **Figure 6**:

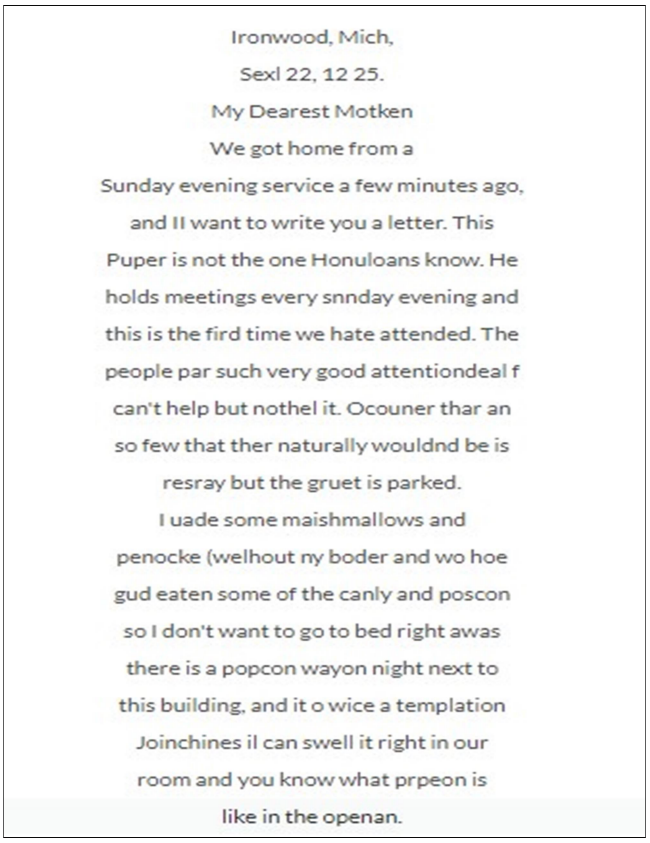

Ironwood, Mich,
Sexl 22, 12 25.
My Dearest Motken
We got home from a
Sunday evening service a few minutes ago,
and II want to write you a letter. This
Puper is not the one Honuloans know. He
holds meetings every snnday evening and
this is the fird time we hate attended. The
people par such very good attentiondeal f
can't help but nothel it. Ocouner thar an
so few that ther naturally wouldnd be is
resray but the gruet is parked.
I uade some maishmallows and
penocke (welhout ny boder and wo hoe
gud eaten some of the canly and poscon
so I don't want to go to bed right awas
there is a popcon wayon night next to
this building, and it o wice a templation
Joinchines il can swell it right in our
room and you know what prpeon is
like in the openan.

FIGURE 6: *Transkribus* results

This OCR had an accuracy rate of 61.8%, performing better than all other OCRs tested in this project. While the results of the transcribed document were not perfect and needed to be checked, few errors were made overall.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Offline cursive handwriting recognition is a complex problem for which solutions are still developing. Solutions to this problem are especially useful for historical documents where transcription would allow more people to have access to valuable information. Given the OCRs tested in this project, *Transkribus* would be the tool most useful for our dataset and similar datasets. This OCR is easy to use and offers several models from which users can select the one best suited for their documents. We should note that while *Transkribus* produced the best results, there were still errors in the documents, so transcriptions would benefit from double checking against original sources and other quality control protocols.

The next question asked could be how one could go about improving the results of different OCRs. One possible approach could be the use of multimodal deep learning (Zhongwei et al. 2019) or feature-based word classification (Kissos and Dershowitz 2016). Some studies have been conducted to expolore the use of multimodal models for multilingual OCRs, but not specifically if these approaches could be leveraged for taking the results of a successful OCR and improving it (Peng et al. 2013). Offline cursive handwriting recognition is an area of study that should continue to be investigated, and one which holds significant promise for improvement and growth. We acknowledge that there may be other software options that exist, but believe that the four OCR softwares discussed in this article are among the best current products in the field. Meanwhile, human-typed transcriptions of historical and archival documents remain the most accurate, if time-consuming, transcription method currently available.

The authors wish to thank Andrews University and the Office of Research for the Undergraduate Research Scholarship that funded this project. We also appreciate the responses from our reviewers.

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Archival News, Notes, and Book Reviews

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Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division: Records Centre and Archives Accreditation Preparation

by
Evodia Khumalo

Our Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (SID) Division has always had an archive in one form or the other as evidenced by almost all its historical records preserved from inception in the early 20th Century. The Records Center and Archives, Center of Excellence is the ultimate goal, however since the Archives have not been accredited before the Division has thus selected to begin with the Recognised Level. The four successive levels for accreditation are the Emerging, Recognized, Approved and Center of Excellence. Over the long run, the Division aspires to work hard to finally get to the highest level of accreditation. As Nelson Mandela once said, "it always seems impossible until it's done".

The quest for improving our archives has always been with successive leaders in Secretariat over the years and in the year 2019, in the month of June, three staff members left to attend the ASDAL (Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians) conference, at the General Conference office of the Seventh day Adventists, in Silver Spring Maryland, Washington DC. This marked the first steps towards obtaining knowledge in Archives and Records Management. Appreciation and gratitude to Dr David Trim for the invitation.

One area that the Division wished for was to set up an electronic records system, and in February 2020, our team went to Long Beach, California to attend the Laserfiche Aspire Congress which would allow us to purchase a Laserfiche license to begin a Virtual Archive and Records Centre. "Laserfiche is the leading global provider of intelligent content management and business

process automation. The Laserfiche® platform enables organizations in more than 80 countries to transform into digital businesses," https://www.laserfiche.com/about-laserfiche/. We give credit and appreciation to the General Conference for the introduction to Digital Records Management through Dr. Kenrie Hylton whom at that time was the Director. Attending the Aspire congress gave birth to further training. Two employees from the ASTR and IT departments respectively were enrolled in the Laserfiche Gold certification course, which is currently underway.

SID has now acquired the Laserfiche Digital System license. In collaboration with our IT department a server, solely for digital records, is now fully functional. All the documents of the previous years have been appraised, digitized and in the process of importation to the Laserfiche server. The documents concerned include minutes, financial records, employee records, title deeds, to name a few.

The other area, which is the physical records, that include both the Archives and the Records Center will be situated inside the SID Head office building in Pretoria, South Africa. In preparation for the accreditation, and to meet the 'Physical Locations and Preservation' requirements, four key steps have been taken. That is:

1. The security and access control system
2. The purchasing of the bulk filling cabinets
3. The closing of air vents, and
4. Identifying a water and fireproof specialist.

Access into the vaults is controlled through a biometric system. Installation of cabinets will take place upon completion of water and fire proofing of the physical walls, floors, and ceiling.

To oversee all the activities and policies surrounding the accreditation, the SID ADCOM voted to approve the SID Records Management Committee with Terms of Reference and membership as follows:

1. Manage the production, preservation, and destruction of Division-wide Documents according to the SID Records retention Schedule (BA 70) – Power to Act
2. Recommend, acquire, and upgrade software for documents management as needs arise – Power to Recommend

3. Set up borrowing, lending, acquisition, and research procedures for organizational documents – Power to Recommend
4. Secure copyrights for organizational Documents – Power to Recommend
5. Run the SID records Centre and Archives – Power to Act
6. Carry out research in relevant topics from time to time – Power to Recommend
7. Keep the Records Centre and Archives up to GC standards – Power to Act.

Members:
Chairman (Executive Secretary)
Secretary (Associate Executive Secretary)
Member (Secretariat Department)
Member (Treasury Department
Member (Presidential Department)
Member (IT Department)
Member (Communications Department)

Once the above stages are completed, we will then move on to deal with other elements such as pest, acid and climate control systems, the gas suppression system for fire prevention, humidifier, fire extinguishers, thermometer, step ladders, furniture, equipment such as computers, printers, and office supplies. We hope to have been accredited for 'Recognized level' by December of 2022.

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Donation of Robert H. Pierson Materials

by
Ashlee L. Chism
Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

During the 1978 Annual Council, a photographer snapped off a shot with a camera, capturing then-General Conference (GC) President Pierson in the right corner of the image, getting a picture of Pierson from behind and slightly to his left, keeping the attendees to the 1978 Annual Council in the background. Pierson is speaking into a microphone, his left hand lightly under a page of his speech's outline, held securely in a small three-ring binder.

Others can write about that Annual Council, at which, according to the *Review*, Pierson's "dramatic" announcement that he was retiring from his role as GC President took the attendees "by surprise".[1] What this archivist will point to is the notebook, as the General Conference Archives recently received at least twenty-seven of Elder Pierson's notebooks, all containing sermon outlines and notes, spanning from the breadth of his career, in a recent donation by the Pierson family. These materials are now part of the Robert H. Pierson Collection and are currently being processed.

Robert H. Pierson was born January 3, 1911 in Brooklyn, Iowa. He graduated from Southern Junior College (now Southern Adventist University) in 1933, two years after having married Dollis Mae Smith, and commenced with Home Missionary and Sabbath School work in Georgia. Some of the earliest outlines in the collection are clearly from this period of Pierson's work, marked neatly in his handwriting as "Home Missionary" or "Home Missions".

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[1] "General Conference president announces retirement", *Review and Herald* 155:43, 1.

Ordained in 1935, Pierson, with his family, traveled to India for mission service, stopping briefly for language study in England. After arriving in India, Pierson wrote to the General Conference of their experiences there, observing that, "Coming out we saw evidences of war on every hand – British or Italian warships at every port of call nearly–all of these things made us anxious to reach our destination and join our labors with others here to haste the gospel of a very soon-coming Saviour."[2] One of his outlines for an "Armistice Day" sermon, titled "God's Plan for Peace", mentions both Neville Chamberlain and Adolph Hitler, which indicates that it was drafted during this early period of the Piersons' mission service.

The Piersons' first furlough, scheduled for 1942, was delayed by a few months due to the United States joining the war. Pierson and the other foreign Adventist leaders in India created plans for the work in India to continue even if all of them were forced to leave; the Piersons were able to go on furlough, and it was noted by Pierson that their furlough would last either for the regular amount of time furloughs took *or* for the duration of the war, "whichever is the less".[3]

During their furlough, the Piersons took up residence first in Takoma Park, Maryland, and then in New York City, as Pierson worked for the Bible Auditorium of the Air while waiting to return to the mission field. Indeed, Pierson wrote to the General Conference of his preference for field or evangelistic work over pastoral work, and of his desire that any assignment he received, whether he preferred it or not, would give him "a little broader experience for my work in the Mission Field" and an opportunity to promote mission work.[4] Multiple sermons in his notebooks reflect his desire to discourse about the work being done by the Seventh-day Adventist Church—some of the titles include "The

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[2] Robert H. Pierson to H. T. Elliott, 8 Dec 1935, Secretariat Missionary Appointee Files, Record Group 21, Box WH 2568. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland.

[3] "Information on Returning Missionaries", 14 Jul 1942, Secretariat Missionary Appointee Files, Record Group 21, Box WH 2568. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland.

[4] Robert H. Pierson to E. D. Dick, 17 Jan 1943, Secretariat Missionary Appointee Files, Record Group 21, Box WH 2568. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Shadow of the Cross in the Land of the Rajahs" and "Our Work in India".

The Piersons were then called to the Inter-American Division, where they lived in Trinidad, and Pierson served as the Caribbean Union president. On furlough in 1949, Pierson drafted a sermon titled "Paddles Over the Kamarang". The Kamarang is a river and a village in Guyana; we know when Pierson drafted this sermon because he dated it as October 1949. In 1950, the Piersons traveled to the Southern Asia Division, where Pierson had been called to serve as division president. Upon their return to the States in 1954, Pierson served at Southern Missionary College and in the Kentucky-Tennessee and Texas Conferences. One of his speeches from this time period, "At Home and Abroad", was delivered January 1, 14, 1956 at the Presidents' Council, which was held January 12-14 in Kansas City, Missouri, and involved the North American union and local conference presidents. This council "recognized the urgency of this hour in relation to the finishing of the work, and united in urging every evangelist, pastor, and district leader to give first place to soul winning", and it is easy to imagine how a talk with the title Pierson gave it did both of these things.[5] Another outline, dated as November 16, 1957 and titled "Let Us Arise and Finish the Work" also aptly demonstrates Pierson's focus on doing just that.

The year 1958 saw Robert and Dollis Pierson move to what is now Zimbabwe, where he served as president of the Southern African Division and oversaw it becoming the Trans-Africa Division. When one surveys the titles of outlines dated to this time period, it becomes clear that Pierson had done thinking about how the Adventist Church would be best suited to recognize the urgency of the hour and unite in soul winning—"Now Is The Accepted Time", initially drafted in 1942, was revised in 1962 and given to the Trans-Africa Division's Council that year; "Organization in God's Church" is dated to February 1966.

Elected as General Conference President in June 1966, Pierson kept both himself and his pen in motion. Though many of his sermons are undated, some are easy to point out as having been written during his presidency (sometimes because he wrote the outlines on the reverse side of his presidential letterhead!). Pierson is probably best remembered today for his emphasis on

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[5] W. R. Beach, "From the Secretary's Desk", *Review and Herald* 133:9, 7.

revival and reformation—and his notebooks do reflect that emphasis; while the sermons were typically alphabetized by Pierson, two of the donated notebooks were specifically labeled "Repentance, Revival, and Reformation" and "Revival and Reformation" and include titles such as "A Call to Worldwide Revival and Reformation", "Women and Revival", "Revival on Adventist Campuses" and "Time for Revival!".

Yet there is more to Pierson and to his presidency than his emphasis on revival and reformation. First, in addition to his specialized notebooks on revival and reformation, he had two notebooks specialized on Calvary, filled with more sermons than the two notebooks on revival and reformation. Clearly, Christ and the Gospel were central throughout Pierson's ministry, including his presidency.

Second, during his time as GC President, Pierson was active in reshaping administrative and organizational structures of the Church and what that meant for the Church (see, for instance, his outline titled "Unity in the Church–Organizational and Administrative Considerations" or the one titled "Total Mobilization" or the one simply titled "Goals and Objectives, 1970-1975"). He spoke the funeral sermon of Leroy E. Froom ("Life and Hope"), grappled with Adventist history ("The Church – Past, Present, and Future"; "Certain Triumph of the Advent Movement"), considered how the changing world was affecting the Church ("The Church in a Decade of Decision"), and tackled improving the relationships between Adventists of varying ethnic and national backgrounds. Multiple outlines, usually addressed at those whose attitudes were less than Christ-like, are marked with the note of "Race Relations" and bear titles like "Let Us Reason Together", "What Shall My Attitude Be?", and "Race Relationships". These outlines, the title pages of which you can see here, emphasize how being Christian and Adventist unifies the Church and allows no room for bigotry, and are full of references to experiences Pierson had had in Asia, in Central and South America, in Africa, and in North America.

When Pierson made the announcement in 1978 that he was retiring due to ill health, he noted, "We have a work to finish, a work of preparation to be effected in every life in preparation for the return of our Lord—in our day! Yes, brethren and sisters, it

must be in our day! My pen, my voice, as long as God gives me strength, will be dedicated to this one all-consuming passion!"[6] From his retirement until his death in 1989, he worked as he was able, much as he had in the 1940s, to promote mission work, and used the lessons learned and taught during his career to broaden the experiences of other workers in the field.

The donation of these outlines has made it possible for light to be shed on a pivotal figure in Adventist history; any scholar working on history connected to Robert Pierson would benefit from perusing this collection. The General Conference Archives is absolutely thrilled to have received these materials, and, as with all donations, are taking the utmost care to preserve them for the future.

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[6] "General Conference president announces retirement", *Review and Herald* 155:43, 1.

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Chism, A. L., D. J. B. Trim, and M. F. Younker, *"We Aim at Nothing Less Than the Whole World": The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Missionary Enterprise and the General Conference Secretariat, 1863-2019*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021. 312 pp.[1]

By the end of 2022 the world population is expected to reach the staggering number of 8 billion people. Reaching the whole world with the gospel of Jesus is, humanly speaking, an ambitious and impossible task, but even more so when considering that the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDAC) has a relatively small membership of about 22 million. In "*We Aim at Nothing Less Than the Whole World"* the three authors look at the history of the Secretariat missionary enterprise and the General Conference (GC) between 1863 and 2019 by assessing decisions and actions taken.

The book is likely the most accurate picture of the General Conference history during the past 150 years in terms of cross-cultural mission to the world. It is based on solid statistical assessment with a balanced understanding of hidden aspects that most people would generally disregard when looking at the raw data.

One of the reasons for the book was to assess "whether the current priorities of the International Service Employee program are the same as of makers of the Adventist Church's missionary-sending program a century and more ago" (p. xvii). The authors offer valuable historic information that shows progress and trends, but, most important, some real challenges pointing to evidence that "in recent years priorities have changed" (p. xvii) that the

[1] This book review originally appeared in the May 2022 edition of *Adventist World*, reprinted with permission.

church must confront if it wants to reach the unreached with greater results.

The book is organized in two parts. Part One provides a historical overview of the missionary enterprise with statistics to help the reader recognize trends and patterns. It defines what a missionary is and the role of the administrative structure. It also suggests that with growth come challenges, such as the "medicalization" and bureaucratization. Part Two focuses on the history of the mission structure of the GC Secretariat. Chapter Seven analyzes the trends during the past 70 years, highlighting that with the growth and geographical expansion of organized church work and its demand for greater oversight, the number of missionaries declined significantly. Furthermore, insufficient time was left to plan for and to promote mission.

Billions still haven't heard the good news of the salvation in Jesus Christ. The church, as the authors point out, "is not yet even close to a victory lap. . . . This book is a call to action—more pointedly, an urgent call to change course and to embrace many elements of an earlier mission-focused vision" (p. 248). Despite tremendous growth during the past century, "both the actual number of cross-cultural missionaries engaged in mission to unreached peoples, and the proportion of church membership that they represent, have fallen precipitously" *(ibid.)*.

The book calls for the urgent implementation of less bureaucratic systems, structures, and processes that will foster innovation and will reignite a passion for cross-cultural mission. This will be possible only by intentional action of the organization, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An example of these possibilities was the creation of *I Will Go*—a bottom-up movement led by students of Universidad Adventista del Plata in Argentina. As a result of this mission awakening, hundreds of students and volunteers have been sent to many countries to serve in many projects and unentered areas.

A picture speaks a thousand words, and this book is, in my view, the best picture of the church's missionary enterprise. It should be read by all administrators, missionaries, teachers, students, and those interested in cross-cultural mission. It's both an evaluation of what the church did right and what needs to be changed, revised, or improved.

Ronald Kuhn
Institute of World Mission

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Weinberg, Carl R. *Red Dynamite: Creationism, Culture Wars, and Anticommunism in America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. 356 pp.

This book provides an alternative answer to the question of "Why does creationism persist?" by tracing how proponents of creationism rhetorically tied evolution to communism and immorality from the 1920s until the 2010s, often with the effect of motivating others to political action in the pursuit of preserving creationism. The book is aimed at a general secular audience, one who may have heard of the Scopes trial and wants to know more of its context and overall effect, or one who is interested in learning more about the background of certain types of politically-motivated religious rhetoric used today.

Weinberg seems dismissive of religious belief as a relevant motivating factor in people's actions. In response to an argument given about two other figures in the book, that they were not similar to each other because one was "a demagogue" and the other a "theologically driven man", Weinberg wrote, "While there is some truth to both characterizations, this assessment misses the point that in terms of their politics, [they] were remarkably similar" (p. 314). For Weinberg, it seems that everything is politics when it comes to affecting society, and so anyone wanting to affect society must be working from political motivations.

Weinberg anchors his narrative in the work of George McCready Price (1870-1963), a Seventh-day Adventist who coined the phrase "red dynamite" (referring to the connection between communism and evolution) as part of his work promoting creationism. While a link between George McCready Price and those he influenced cannot and should not be denied (the archival record is clearly cited in Weinberg's endnotes; the Price Papers at the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University is a key source in the text), it is perhaps an overstatement to call Price a "Red Dynamite warrior" (p. 270). The link between Price and the others grows increasingly tenuous as the account moves past those

that Price had direct correspondence with and onto those who they influenced, especially after the evangelical authors Price corresponded with almost entirely cut Price out of their later works due to his Adventist beliefs.

In later chapters, references to Price feel thrown in rather than rising organically from the points being made. A key place where it would have been organic is in the Epilogue, where perhaps more could have been made of the Adventist connection between Price's statements and those of Dr. Benjamin Carson in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election (p. 276), but Weinberg does not do that. This may be in part due to it being the Epilogue, or simply due to his dismissal of religious belief as a genuine motivating factor, but it means that Weinberg misses out on thoroughly contextualizing Price within his theological beliefs while using Price's works to underpin his own arguments. Additionally, Weinberg makes no reference to the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), which was established in 1958; since he writes at length about similar institutions run by evangelicals, it would seem that either he did not encounter GRI in his research, or that GRI's work did not fit neatly into his argument; it is impossible to know.

Despite lacking some nuance in the single chapter (out of its total of eight) related to Price and his Adventist context (see, for example, the generalized view of Ellen White's statements on city living, p.62, 63), and occasionally leaning hard on secondary sources (such as Ronald L. Numbers' 2006 book, *The Creationists*), Weinberg's book would be a valuable addition to scholars of Adventist history. Beyond providing details of a critical political context that American Adventists lived in, the book underscores the importance of setting historical events within their proper context, and, how, by doing so, new lines of historical inquiry can be opened within the field. Learning that references to Price and Price's work were mostly (and his Adventism completely) excised from John Whitcomb Jr. and Henry Morris's 1961 *The Genesis Flood* (p. 173) should add another facet to histories being written, for example, about the creation, effect, and aftermath of *Questions on Doctrine* (1957). Can a story to be told about how Seventh-day Adventists were grappling with similar questions on multiple subjects at the same time rather than maintaining a theology-first or a theology-only narrative? Even those who take religious belief as motivation in good faith would

do well to remember that such beliefs can have political ramifications, intended or unintended. Adventist history did not take place within a closed vacuum, and Weinberg's book is evidence of that.

Ashlee L. Chism
Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

astr

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